

Theorists of Modernist Poetry

T.S Eliot, T.E Hulme and Ezra Pound

Rebecca Beasley

THEORISTS OF MODERNIST POETRY

'No one can understand the revolution that was Modernism in Anglo-America without some familiarity with the theoretical and critical writings of Eliot and Pound – and before them, T.E. Hulme . . . Rebecca Beasley's *Theorists of Modernist Poetry* provides newcomers to this field with an excellent introduction to the complex strains that inform the poetic theories in question and argues convincingly that, however problematic the later politics of Eliot and Pound, the legacy of their poetics remains crucial today.'

Marjorie Perloff, *Stanford University*

This volume examines T.S. Eliot, T.E. Hulme and Ezra Pound, three of the most influential figures of the modernist movement, and argues that we cannot dissociate their bold, inventive poetic forms from their profoundly engaged theories of social and political reform.

Tracing the complex theoretical foundations of modernist poetics, Rebecca Beasley examines:

- the aesthetic modes and theories that formed a context for modernism
- the influence of contemporary philosophical movements
- the modernist critique of democracy
- the importance of the First World War
- modernism's programmes for social reform

Examining the critical thought and poetry of Eliot, Hulme and Pound, this volume offers invaluable insight into the modernist movement, as well as demonstrating the deep influence of the three poets on the shape and values of the discipline of English Literature itself. In this way, *Theorists of Modernist Poetry* is relevant not only to students of modernism, but to all those with an interest in why we study, teach, read and evaluate literature the way we do.

Rebecca Beasley teaches in the School of English and Humanities, Birkbeck, University of London, and is the author of *Ezra Pound and the Visual Culture of Modernism* (2007).

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T.S. Eliot, T.E. Hulme, Ezra Pound

Rebecca Beasley

First published 2007
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge
270 Madison Ave, New York, NY 10016

This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2007.

"To purchase your own copy of this or any of Taylor & Francis or Routledge's collection of thousands of eBooks please go to www.eBookstore.tandf.co.uk."

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data

Beasley, Rebecca, 1971-

Theorists of modernist poetry: T.S. Eliot, T.E. Hulme, Ezra Pound/
Rebecca Beasley.

p. cm. – (Routledge critical thinkers)

1. American poetry – 20th century – History and criticism – Theory, etc.
2. Modernism (Literature) – United States.
3. Eliot, T.S. (Thomas Stearns), 1888–1965 – Criticism and interpretation.
4. Hulme, T.E. (Thomas Ernest), 1883–1917 – Criticism and interpretation.
5. Pound, Ezra, 1885–1972 – Criticism and interpretation.
6. Poetics – History – 20th century.

PS310.M57.R43 2007

811'.509 – dc22

2007018157

ISBN 0-203-93421-0 Master e-book ISBN

ISBN10: 0-415-28540-2 (hbk)

ISBN10: 0-415-28541-0 (pbk)

ISBN10: 0-203-93421-0 (ebk)

ISBN13: 978-0-415-28540-7 (hbk)

ISBN13: 978-0-415-28541-4 (pbk)

ISBN13: 978-0-203-93421-0 (ebk)

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SERIES EDITOR'S PREFACE

The books in this series offer introductions to major critical thinkers who have influenced literary studies and the humanities. The *Routledge Critical Thinkers* series provides the books you can turn to first when a new name or concept appears in your studies.

Each book will equip you to approach a key thinker's original texts by explaining their key ideas, putting them into context and, perhaps most importantly, showing you why this thinker is considered to be significant. The emphasis is on concise, clearly written guides which do not presuppose a specialist knowledge. Although the focus is on particular figures, the series stresses that no critical thinker ever existed in a vacuum but, instead, emerged from a broader intellectual, cultural and social history. Finally, these books will act as a bridge between you and the thinkers' original texts: not replacing them but rather complementing what they wrote. In some cases, volumes consider small clusters of thinkers, working in the same area, developing similar ideas or influencing each other.

These books are necessary for a number of reasons. In his 1997 autobiography, *Not Entitled*, the literary critic Frank Kermode wrote of a time in the 1960s:

On beautiful summer lawns, young people lay together all night, recovering from their daytime exertions and listening to a troupe of Balinese musicians.

Under their blankets or their sleeping bags, they would chat drowsily about the gurus of the time. . . . What they repeated was largely hearsay; hence my lunchtime suggestion, quite impromptu, for a series of short, very cheap books offering authoritative but intelligible introductions to such figures.

There is still a need for ‘authoritative and intelligible introductions’. But this series reflects a different world from the 1960s. New thinkers have emerged and the reputations of others have risen and fallen, as new research has developed. New methodologies and challenging ideas have spread through the arts and humanities. The study of literature is no longer – if it ever was – simply the study and evaluation of poems, novels and plays. It is also the study of ideas, issues and difficulties which arise in any literary text and in its interpretation. Other arts and humanities subjects have changed in analogous ways.

With these changes, new problems have emerged. The ideas and issues behind these radical changes in the humanities are often presented without reference to wider contexts or as theories which you can simply ‘add on’ to the texts you read. Certainly, there’s nothing wrong with picking out selected ideas or using what comes to hand – indeed, some thinkers have argued that this is, in fact, all we can do. However, it is sometimes forgotten that each new idea comes from the pattern and development of somebody’s thought and it is important to study the range and context of their ideas. Against theories ‘floating in space’, the *Routledge Critical Thinkers* series places key thinkers and their ideas firmly back in their contexts.

More than this, these books reflect the need to go back to the thinkers’ own texts and ideas. Every interpretation of an idea, even the most seemingly innocent one, offers its own ‘spin’, implicitly or explicitly. To read only books on a thinker, rather than texts by that thinker, is to deny yourself a chance of making up your own mind. Sometimes what makes a significant figure’s work hard to approach is not so much its style or content as the feeling of not knowing where to start. The purpose of these books is to give you a ‘way in’ by offering an accessible overview of these thinkers’ ideas and works and by guiding your further reading, starting with each thinker’s own texts. To use a metaphor from the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951), these books are ladders, to be thrown away after you have climbed to the next level. Not only, then, do they equip you to approach new

ideas, but also they empower you, by leading you back to the theorist's own texts and encouraging you to develop your own informed opinions.

Finally, these books are necessary because, just as intellectual needs have changed, the education systems around the world – the contexts in which introductory books are usually read – have changed radically, too. What was suitable for the minority higher education system of the 1960s is not suitable for the larger, wider, more diverse, high technology education systems of the twenty-first century. These changes call not just for new, up-to-date introductions but new methods of presentation. The presentational aspects of *Routledge Critical Thinkers* have been developed with today's students in mind.

Each book in the series has a similar structure. They begin with a section offering an overview of the life and ideas of the featured thinkers and explain why they are important. The central section of each book discusses the thinkers' key ideas, their context, evolution and reception; with the books that deal with more than one thinker, they also explain and explore the influence of each on each. The volumes conclude with a survey of the impact of the thinker or thinkers, outlining how their ideas have been taken up and developed by others. In addition, there is a detailed final section suggesting and describing books for further reading. This is not a 'tacked-on' section but an integral part of each volume. In the first part of this section you will find brief descriptions of the thinkers' key works, then, following this, information on the most useful critical works and, in some cases, on relevant websites. This section will guide you in your reading, enabling you to follow your interests and develop your own projects. Throughout each book, references are given in what is known as the Harvard system (the author and the date of a work cited are given in the text and you can look up the full details in the bibliography at the back). This offers a lot of information in very little space. The books also explain technical terms and use boxes to describe events or ideas in more detail, away from the main emphasis of the discussion. Boxes are also used at times to highlight definitions of terms frequently used or coined by a thinker. In this way, the boxes serve as a kind of glossary, easily identified when flicking through the book.

The thinkers in the series are 'critical' for three reasons. First, they are examined in the light of subjects which involve criticism: principally literary studies or English and cultural studies, but also other disciplines which rely on the criticism of books, ideas, theories and unquestioned

assumptions. Second, they are critical because studying their work will provide you with a ‘tool kit’ for your own informed critical reading and thought, which will make you critical. Third, these thinkers are critical because they are crucially important: they deal with ideas and questions which can overturn conventional understandings of the world, of texts, of everything we take for granted, leaving us with a deeper understanding of what we already knew and with new ideas.

No introduction can tell you everything. However, by offering a way into critical thinking, this series hopes to begin to engage you in an activity which is productive, constructive and potentially life-changing.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am very grateful to the friends and colleagues who offered help and advice during the writing of this book. I owe a particular debt of gratitude to Peter White, whose comments on the manuscript were invaluable, and I would also like to thank Robert Eaglestone, Jason Harding and, at Routledge, Polly Dodson. My love and thanks to Sharon Ellis, Elizabeth Crayford and the Ellis Wood family, who provided such a congenial environment in which to finish the book, and to Markman Ellis, for everything.

WHY ELIOT, HULME AND POUND?

T.S. Eliot, T.E. Hulme and Ezra Pound are three of the most significant figures in the early twentieth-century literary phenomenon we have come to call modernism. They revolutionized Anglo-American poetry, arguing that traditional poetic forms and themes could no longer encapsulate the experience of the modern world. They were pioneers in the use of free verse and in their expansion of the subject matter of poetry. During his short career, T.E. Hulme provided the intellectual impetus for Pound's imagist movement, which Eliot called 'the starting-point of modern poetry' (1978: 58). Eliot's *The Waste Land* and Pound's *The Cantos* are renowned as two of the most innovative and influential poems in the English language.

But it is not only their poetic experimentation that makes these poets significant. The thinking of Eliot, Hulme and Pound is largely responsible for shaping the modernism we have inherited. They were the primary theorists of the major issues we traditionally associate with modernism: disinterestedness vs political engagement, elitism vs democracy, tradition vs novelty, abstraction vs realism. Until recently, the canon of early twentieth-century literature was made up of writers they praised. Their fascination with obscure literary traditions and contemporary philosophy even reshaped the pre-twentieth-century literary canon. They established an enormously influential system of literary values, disseminated through their critical essays and their editorial authority. This book will trace the formation of those values.

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However, some of the most important recent criticism of early twentieth-century literature rightly argues that our understanding of the period has been restricted by the influence of a small modernist coterie and its associated literary values. It may be that we want to reject the dominance of their literary theories and argue for a more inclusive and various account of early twentieth-century literature, an account that includes, for example, more writing by women, and writing significant for reasons other than verbal experimentation. Nevertheless, a precise understanding of the cultural field constructed by Eliot, Hulme and Pound remains vital if we are to delineate the diversity of intellectual discussion in the period. Far from being exclusively literary in their interests, as they have been accused in the past, these writers were vitally compelled by the pressing intellectual questions of their day, in the fields of philosophy, fine art, economics, politics and education, to name just a few of the subjects of their criticism.

Indeed, it is precisely the variety of their interests that makes them both such important, but also such problematic figures. Their insistent connecting of the literary and political fields, for example, makes us ask fundamental questions about the role of literature in society, and the role of the poet or artist, too. Should the poet comment on political decisions, or even attempt to influence political decisions? All three of these writers answered an emphatic ‘yes’ to this question: in their view, their roles as specialists in the realm of culture required political statement. This may not seem contentious, but when we find out that Eliot’s, Hulme’s and Pound’s political statements were anti-Semitic, anti-democratic and fascist respectively, our response to their creative writing becomes more difficult to formulate. The cultural and political works of these writers have forced readers to think hard about the extent to which poetry involves politics: can one admire a writer’s poetry while deplored their politics? How can one draw a line between the poetic and the political? If we are to even begin to be able to answer those questions, we must look closely at the intellectual trajectories of these writers.

CAREERS

T.E. Hulme

T.E. Hulme was born in North Staffordshire in 1883; he died fighting in the First World War (1914–1918) in 1917. His reputation rests on

a small number of poems, essays, lectures and unfinished manuscripts of notes, which have been collected and published in various forms since his death. Although individual writers and critics, including Eliot, have consistently attested to his importance, the initially partial and unchronological publication of his writings in the collections *Speculations* (1924) and *Further Speculations* (1955) suggested a somewhat inconsistent thinker. In 1994, however, Karen Csengeri published her rigorous *Collected Writings of T.E. Hulme*, which gives a far fuller and more logical account of Hulme's thought.

Hulme excelled in mathematics, science and English at school, and in 1902 he won an exhibition scholarship to St John's College, Cambridge to read mathematics. In 1904, however, he was sent down for disruptive behaviour. After a short period at University College London, he travelled to Canada where he began the collection of philosophical notes and observations he called 'Cinders'. He returned briefly to England in 1907, before leaving to work as an English language teacher in Brussels. This experience, not surprisingly, appears to have encouraged him to connect the theories set out in 'Cinders' to questions of language: the resulting 'Notes on Language and Style', like 'Cinders', were published posthumously.

Hulme later said that his trip to Canada had made him feel 'the inevitableness of verse', and on his return to London in 1908, he joined the Poets' Club, with whom he published his first poetry, and to whom he delivered his 'A Lecture on Modern Poetry' in November 1908. This lecture is one of Hulme's few pieces of literary criticism, and it is important because it is a very early statement of the poetic principles associated with modernism. It advocated writing in free verse and juxtaposing distinct images on separate lines to convey the new emotions conjured up by the modern world, an argument that was an extension of his exploration of the complex relationship between reality, consciousness and language in 'Cinders' and 'Notes on Language and Style', but was also influenced by his reading of the free verse poems of the French symbolists. In 1909 Hulme left the Poets' Club and began an equivalent group of his own: Ezra Pound, recently arrived in London, attended the group for the first time in April. This group focussed its discussion and writing on the poetic image, and Hulme's theorizing of this approach to poetry is one of his most important claims to posterity, because it formed one of the bases for the influential imagist movement founded by Pound in 1912.

But Hulme's other claim to posterity is as an interpreter of continental philosophy. Over the next few years, he would become compelled successively by the thought of the French philosopher Henri Bergson, the French royalist and classicist group of writers known as the Action Française (led by Charles Maurras and Pierre Lasserre), the French syndicalist Georges Sorel and the German aesthetician Wilhelm Worringer. Hulme probably first read Bergson in 1907; between 1909 and 1913 most of his writing concerned Bergson's philosophy, and his translation of Bergson's 'Introduction à la métaphysique' ('An Introduction to Metaphysics') appeared in 1912. However, in 1911 he was persuaded by Pierre Lasserre that Bergson's philosophy was incompatible with his conservative politics, and the later of his articles on Bergson show him moving away from Bergson's so-called 'romantic' philosophy, towards the 'classicism' of the Action Française group. His polemic essay 'Romanticism and Classicism', which identifies the best of modern art and literature with the 'new classical spirit', dates from this period, as do a number of articles on Tory politics. In 1913 Hulme extended this argument to art and culture after encountering Worringer's work on geometric and naturalist art. In a lecture later published as 'Modern Art and Its Philosophy', Hulme identified naturalist art with the romantic spirit and geometric art with the classical spirit, which he saw realized in the sculpture of Jacob Epstein and the painting of Wyndham Lewis. Hulme thus became a champion of avant-garde art, and planned a book on Epstein's work.

Hulme enlisted in the British army when the First World War began in August 1914. Wounded in 1915, he wrote a series of 'War Notes' arguing against pacifism, and particularly against Bertrand Russell's defence of the pacifist position, which he regarded as proceeding from a mistakenly romantic conception of man as inherently good. During this time, he also wrote an introduction to his translation of Georges Sorel's *Réflexions sur la violence* (*Reflections on Violence*), which had first been published in 1914. In this Hulme continued his assault on romanticism in philosophy and politics, and argued that human beings needed discipline rather than freedom to achieve anything of value. This was to be his final philosophical position: his 'War Notes', his introduction to Sorel, and a collection of articles summarizing his ideas published at the same time as 'A Notebook', all reject the romantic or, as he was now calling it, 'humanist' attitude, in favour of the classical or 'religious' attitude. It was in these final works that Hulme influenced T.S. Eliot.

Ezra Pound

Ezra Pound was born in Hailey, Idaho, in 1885, but his family moved to Philadelphia in 1889; he died in Venice in 1972. Pound's *oeuvre* is considerably larger than Hulme's. In addition to his many short poems and his vast, unfinished poem, *The Cantos*, Pound wrote critical works on literature, culture and economics, was a prolific writer of articles on a wide variety of subjects, an accomplished translator, a musical composer and a very profuse letter-writer. His *Literary Essays* (edited by Eliot), his *Selected Prose* and *Selected Letters* gather the best-known prose writings, and his most significant poetry is collected in *Personae* and *The Cantos*, available in selected and complete editions. The importance of Pound's highly innovative poetry is undisputed, but his personal reputation has periodically threatened its position in the literary canon. From 1924, Pound became a supporter of Mussolini's fascist regime in Italy, and he was arrested for treason in 1944. He was found medically unfit to stand trial and committed to St Elizabeth's Hospital for the Criminally Insane in Washington, DC, where he stayed until released in 1958.

Pound entered the University of Pennsylvania at the precocious age of fifteen, but after two years of poor grades transferred to Hamilton College, in Clinton, New York. After graduating in 1905, he returned to the University of Pennsylvania to study Romance languages, and received his MA the following year. He began doctoral work, envisioning a dissertation on the seventeenth-century Spanish playwright Lope de Vega, but left in 1907, expressing a disillusionment with university education that would become a lifelong concern. He briefly taught at Wabash College, Indiana, before leaving for Europe in 1908. Pound's first book of poetry, *A Lume Spento*, was published at his own expense that summer, and in August he arrived in London. His second book of poetry, *A Quinzaine for this Yule*, was published that winter. This early work was influenced both by Pound's medieval studies, especially of Provençal troubadour poetry, and his reading of late nineteenth-century poets such as William Morris and Algernon Swinburne. Over the next few years, Pound concentrated on refining the form of the dramatic lyric, as reflected in the titles of his volumes of verse, *Personae* (1909), *Exultations* (1909), *Canzoni* (1911) and *Ripostes* (1912).

Pound began to develop his reputation as a critic simultaneously. Drawing on his university studies, he gave six lectures at the London

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Polytechnic in 1909, rewritten as his first prose work, *The Spirit of Romance* (1910), and in 1911 he published a series of articles, 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris' in the periodical *The New Age*, to which he contributed extensively over the next decade. In these works, Pound aimed to establish a 'New Method in Scholarship' (1973: 21), inspired in part by conversations with Hulme about Bergson and the revelatory power of the visual image. This 'method of Luminous Detail', as Pound called it in 1911, would later be renamed 'the ideogrammic method', in reference to Pound's erroneous belief that the Chinese ideogram literally pictures its meaning, thus enabling a direct correspondence between word and meaning. He took this view from the eminent American historian of Chinese and Japanese art, Ernest Fenollosa, whose manuscripts Pound would begin editing in 1913, resulting not only in his famous translations of Chinese poetry, *Cathay* (1915), and Japanese Noh plays, *Certain Noble Plays of Japan* (1916), but also in a lifelong interest in China, the Chinese language, and Confucianism.

By 1912 Pound had started to build a reputation for his idiosyncratic and deliberately archaic verse, published and reviewed in England and the United States. In this year, however, he changed direction substantially. Avowedly influenced by Hulme's delineations of the poetic image, Pound founded the imagist group of poets, initially consisting of himself, the American poet Hilda Doolittle ('H.D.'), and the British poet Richard Aldington. Imagism was launched in the United States by a small Chicago-based magazine, *Poetry*, for which Pound was foreign editor; in England it was launched by *The New Freewoman*, subsequently re-named *The Egoist*, whose individualist philosophy was an important influence on Pound at this time. Individualism was also a keynote of the vorticist movement, the fine art movement founded by Wyndham Lewis in 1914, to which Pound welded his imagist project. Following Hulme's lead, Pound wrote a series of articles in *The New Age* promoting the vorticists, especially Lewis, Epstein, and a young French sculptor called Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, as the embodiment of a new artistic Renaissance. Gaudier-Brzeska's death in battle in 1915 was a profound shock to Pound, and the impact of the First World War was to shift his critical essays and his poetry away from narrowly literary or artistic concerns: for the rest of his life he would insistently question the relationship between culture, politics and economics, the latter fuelled by his encounter with the Social Credit monetary reform theories of the economist C.H. Douglas in 1918. Pound's poem 'Hugh Selwyn

Mauberley' (1920) documents his resolution to abandon the primarily aesthetic project of imagism, in order to write poetry that would critically engage with the crises facing the post-war generation.

That engaged poetry turned out to be *The Cantos*, the massive poetic project that aimed to account for modern civilization and occupied Pound for the rest of his life. Instalments were published in magazines from 1917, and in 1925 the first sixteen were published in book form. The poem adopts the 'ideogrammic method' that had its origin in Pound's 'method of Luminous Detail', juxtaposing historical narratives and anecdotes, quotations and contemporary comment to examine patterns of historical events, and draw out exemplary civilizations and figures. From Paris, to which he moved in 1921, and Italy, to which he moved in 1924, Pound continued to contribute extensively to journals and, in various editorial capacities, further the careers of young writers he encountered. During this time, Pound's writings took on an increasing coherence: his essays, letters and poetry converged on similar terrain as he worked to bring his beliefs about culture, politics and economics to bear on each other, and on the ideas underpinning Mussolini's fascist government. Pound was attracted by Mussolini's proposed economic reforms, which he compared to those of Thomas Jefferson and mistakenly believed would establish a non-capitalist society. In 1933 he obtained an audience with Mussolini, and in 1935 published his strident advertisement for his politics, *Jefferson and/or Mussolini*.

By the time the Second World War broke out, most of the elements of Pound's mature philosophy were in place: it had become an unlikely synthesis of Italian fascism, Social Credit economics, and Confucian social values, described most completely in his 1938 *Guide to Kulchur*. Although he supported fascist Italy, Pound also saw himself as an American patriot, and between 1941 and 1943 he broadcasted his interpretation of the political situation to the United States and its troops, criticizing the United States' role. Indicted in his absence on thirteen counts of treason in 1943, he was arrested in 1944, following Italy's surrender, and confined in an army training camp in Pisa, where he suffered a breakdown. Yet here, faced with the ruin of the civilization he had envisioned under Mussolini's regime, Pound wrote some of the most beautiful poetry of his career. Amid great controversy, *The Pisan Cantos* was awarded the Bollingen Prize for the best volume of verse by an American poet published in 1948, unleashing debates about the relationship between politics and art across the international media.

By this time, Pound had been flown to the United States, and committed to St Elizabeth's Hospital.

Pound continued to research and write in St Elizabeth's, and despite the controversy his case aroused, or rather partly because of it, this period saw a consolidation of his literary status, as young writers and critics influenced by his work brought out collections of his writing. Among these admirers were James Laughlin, who founded the New Directions press, still Pound's American publisher, and Hugh Kenner, one of the most influential modernist critics, who wrote the first full-length book on Pound, *The Poetry of Ezra Pound* (1951), and in *The Pound Era* (1972) conceptualized modernism itself in terms of Pound's career. In 1958 Pound was finally released from St Elizabeth's and he returned to Italy. He continued to publish further cantos, but his failing health and debilitating depression caused him to gradually fall into literary and physical silence.

T.S. Eliot

T.S. Eliot was born in 1888 in St Louis, Missouri; he died in London in 1965. During his lifetime, his literary status was unparalleled: his critical works have been as influential as his poetry, taken up by a generation of mid-century critics, including I.A. Richards, F.R. Leavis and the American New Critics, who placed Eliot centrally, not only in the canon of twentieth-century poetry, but in the study of English literature and culture more generally. His *Complete Poems and Plays* and *Selected Essays* collect his major works, and the first volume of his letters was published in 1988. Since his death his reputation has suffered some vicissitudes: his political conservatism and Anglo-Catholicism have proved unappealing, and charges of anti-Semitism have been vigorously debated. Nevertheless, his influence on twentieth-century poetry and aspects of his cultural diagnoses are enduringly pervasive.

Eliot entered Harvard University in 1906, graduating with a BA in 1909 and an MA in English literature in 1910. In 1908 he read Arthur Symons's *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1899), his introduction to the free verse poetry of the French symbolists. In the work of the symbolist Jules Laforgue he found a parallel with the Elizabethan and Jacobean verse to which he was also attracted, and it was these sources that he credited with transforming his poetic style from the rather conventional experiments in aestheticism that also characterized much

of Pound's early verse, to the development of the typically Eliotian ironic, self-conscious and urban personae of 'Conversation Galante', 'Preludes', 'Portrait of a Lady' and 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', all composed between 1909 and 1911 and included in his first book of verse, published in 1917. Also in 1909, Eliot took Irving Babbitt's course 'Literary Criticism in France', in which Babbitt, drawing like Hulme on the work of Pierre Lasserre, advanced the claims of classicism over romanticism and deplored the relativism of modern society.

After completing his MA, Eliot lived in Paris for a year, studying French literature and philosophy at the Sorbonne, and attending Bergson's lectures at the Collège de France. Eliot also encountered a more profound and long-lasting influence during this period in the classicist, anti-democratic thinking of Charles Maurras and the Action Française, which consolidated Babbitt's teaching. In 1911, he returned to Harvard to begin doctoral work in philosophy. He took classes in Sanskrit, Eastern philosophy and comparative methodology, in which he explored the anthropological interests that would be so important to *The Waste Land*, and would later inform his belief in the cultural importance of Christianity. He decided that his doctoral dissertation would be an examination of the British philosopher, F.H. Bradley, whose thinking would substantially shape his own. In 1914, he returned to Europe to continue his studies in Oxford.

Eliot completed and submitted his dissertation in 1916, but since he did not return to Harvard for the oral examination, the degree was not conferred. By then, his career as a poet had begun: in 1914 he had met Pound, who was impressed by 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' and had it published in *Poetry* magazine, the first of several poems that would appear there. By 1916 Eliot was publishing literary reviews and essays, alongside specialist philosophical articles drawing on his doctoral work. In 1917 he joined the Colonial and Foreign Department of Lloyds Bank, became assistant editor of *The Egoist*, and published his first volume of verse, *Prufrock and Other Observations*. His second volume, *Poems*, appeared only two years later, published by Virginia and Leonard Woolf at their Hogarth Press, and his third, *Ara vos Prec* (consisting mainly of poems included in the previous two volumes), was published by the modernist writer John Rodker in 1920. The same year, Eliot's first American collection appeared, as did his first volume of criticism, *The Sacred Wood*. Although Eliot appeared

on the literary scene slightly later than Hulme and Pound, then, his impact was swiftly and deeply felt: by 1920 he had already built a substantial international reputation. This is not to say that his work was universally accepted: conservative critics found his poetry obscure and somewhat trivial in its registering of minute impressions, as they had found Hulme's and Pound's, too.

The poem that sealed Eliot's reputation was *The Waste Land*, published in 1922. It was far more allusive and more difficult than his previous work, and indeed that difficulty was emphasized by Eliot's notorious notes to the poem. *The Sacred Wood* was of more use to readers and reviewers: the famous essay 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', in particular, introduced Eliot's belief (following Babbitt) that modern poetry should eschew the emotional excesses of romantic poetry and be 'impersonal', an expression of a collective literary tradition, rather than of a poet's individuality. *The Sacred Wood* also highlighted Eliot's interest in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, the influence of which was immediately evident in *The Waste Land*. Finally, *The Waste Land* became legible in the context of literary modernism itself: Joyce's *Ulysses* was also published in 1922 and Pound's *Cantos* had been appearing in periodicals over the past few years. The extensive literary allusions, multiple narrative voices, and structural importance of myth in all three works suggested the emergence of a post-war style, an approach that was distinctively of its time, rather than the production of a single idiosyncratic mind.

The 1920s and 1930s represented the consolidation of Eliot's literary status. He was by now far more integrated into the English literary establishment than Hulme had been or Pound ever would be: he reviewed for the *Athenaeum* and *The Times Literary Supplement* and in 1922 he began his own quarterly journal, *The Criterion*, whose classicist perspective was advanced by the publication of writing by Sorel, Maurras, Hulme and Babbitt. In 1925 Eliot left Lloyds Bank to join the board of directors of Faber and Gwyer: his editorial presence there would influence the course of twentieth-century poetry. Important studies of Eliot's work began to appear in the late 1920s, including commentaries by the Cambridge-based academics I.A. Richards, F.R. Leavis and William Empson, all powerful figures in the establishment of new forms of literary criticism, and of English itself as a subject of study. Eliot's American reputation was also growing in this period: in 1932 further collections of his poetry and essays were published,

he undertook a lecture tour in 1933 that generated *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1933) and *After Strange Gods* (1934), and books by influential critics such as F.O. Matthiessen and Cleanth Brooks placed Eliot at the centre of modern developments in poetry.

But by this point, Eliot was no longer simply a poetic innovator or literary critic. After writing *The Waste Land*, Eliot had begun to write drama, and his first plays were published in this period: *Sweeney Agonistes* (1932), the collaborative venture of *The Rock* (1934), *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935) and *The Family Reunion* (1939) – to be followed in later years by *The Cocktail Party* (1949), *The Confidential Clerk* (1953) and *The Elder Statesman* (1958). More significantly for this book, though, this was also the period in which Eliot, like Pound, was increasingly turning his attention to larger issues of cultural crisis. Although this concern is evident to an extent in his earliest essays, it moved into a new phase after 1927, when Eliot was baptized and received into the Church of England. ‘Literary criticism’, he now said, ‘should be completed by criticism from a definite ethical and theological standpoint’ (1980: 388), and in his *Criterion* essays, his lectures, his poetry, and his plays, Eliot developed his long-standing classicist arguments for order and authority into more explicit prescriptions for a moral society founded on a strong church and monarchy. His most important statements on this subject were made in *The Idea of a Christian Society* (1939), and *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* (1948), both of which grew out of his service on a church discussion forum. But it has been said that Eliot’s ‘true political testament’ was *Four Quartets*, his last great work of poetry, consisting of ‘Burnt Norton’ (1936), ‘East Coker’ (1940), ‘The Dry Salvages’ (1941) and ‘Little Gidding’ (1942), in which he re-examines the philosophical issues with which he began his career: the workings of time, memory, ritual and the relation of experience to verbal expression (Moody 1994: 71). In his final years, awards, prizes and degrees were liberally conferred upon Eliot, including the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1948. He was the emblematic cultural figure of his time: during the week of his death, the cover of the *New Statesman* read: ‘The Age of Eliot’.

INTELLECTUAL TRANSITIONS

Eliot, Hulme and Pound were born and educated during a time of intellectual upheaval. The scientific advances of the nineteenth century

had given the period a remarkable sense of confidence in its own ability to explain the natural world in all its complexity. But towards the end of the century it became clear that this confidence was misplaced. The limitations of science began to be felt as previously secure scientific formulations were questioned and interest began to turn to areas that seemed to evade scientific analysis, areas better approached by the new subject of psychology, or by philosophy, or even by studies of the occult. Modernism might be understood as the product of this intellectual crisis, occurring when the structures of enquiry were overwhelmingly scientific, yet the limitations of those structures were palpably felt. The legacy of the nineteenth century is felt in modernism's urge to question, analyse, and categorize – all three of these writers use noticeably scientific vocabularies – but at the same time, they deliberately focus their attention on that which cannot be scientifically proven. Although these three writers come from quite different backgrounds, they begin their careers by asking remarkably similar questions, and even come to some of the same answers independently of each other.

Hulme, the eldest of the three, appeared destined to be a mathematician or a scientist. But his 1906 trip to Canada, and the writing of his '*Cinders*', constituted a turning-point in his intellectual development. It appears that the sheer size of the Canadian prairies challenged Hulme's previously confident belief that the world could be explained in terms of mathematical principles: 'formerly, one liked theories because they reduced the world to a single principle', he wrote, 'now the same reason disgusts us. The flats of Canada are incomprehensible on any single theory. The world only comprehensible on the cinder theory' (1994: 10–11). Hulme's '*cinder theory*' conceives of the world as essentially plural, made up of a mass of disordered elements, like cinders in an ash-heap. But, Hulme goes on to explain, we are unable to comprehend the world in all its plurality, so we create artificial ordering systems for it, which he likens to placing a '*manufactured chess-board*' on the ash-heap (1994: 9). These ordering systems take a number of forms: religious beliefs are one way of making sense of the world, mathematical formulae are another, and perhaps the ultimate ordering system is language itself. The trouble is, Hulme says, we tend to forget that these systems are simply an approximate, often arbitrary, means to understand the chaotic '*real*' world lying underneath: we find ourselves thinking that they have some kind of intrinsic connection to reality, or indeed are reality. This, for Hulme, is where mathematics goes wrong.

Hulme was by no means alone in conceiving of the relationship between reality and our understanding of it in this way. The opposition between immediate experience and organizing concepts was widespread in turn-of-the-century thought, and the following year Hulme would encounter an exploration of this opposition in Bergson's work. But what is interesting for our purposes is that Hulme connected this philosophical insight with a need to write poetry: 'the first time I ever felt the necessity or inevitability of verse', he wrote, 'was in the desire to reproduce the peculiar quality of feeling which is induced by the flat spaces and wide horizons of the virgin prairie of western Canada' (1994: 53). For Hulme, poetry could compensate for the gap between experience and understanding, because poetry's 'direct language' of images 'arrests your mind all the time with a picture' (1994: 55). In other words, poetry constantly brings us up short and forces us to attend to the process of perception by which we are making sense of the world. In doing so, it makes us look more closely at the world itself, instead of relying on the clichés and lazy habits of thought that make up our everyday use of language. For Hulme, to perceive things in terms of atomized images, instead of coherent narratives, was modern, an explicit reaction against nineteenth-century habits of thought.

By the time he met Hulme, Pound had also come to some of these conclusions, despite the fact that his educational background and early career initially appear very different. He once said that he had gone to college with the 'intention of studying comparative values in literature (poetry) and began doing so unbeknown to the faculty' (Carpenter 1988: 37). The phrasing of that sentence is telling, because Pound saw his study of 'comparative values' in direct opposition to the way he was actually taught. Pound was trained as a philologist: he was taught to study the literature of the past by researching the historical use of individual words and analysing etymologies. Philology was an explicitly scientific take on literary study, and although it had a substantial impact on the way Pound thought about literature, his early writings show his frustration with its limitations.

Pound insisted that his first book of criticism, *The Spirit of Romance*, was 'not a philological work'. Although it grew out of his university studies, it attempted to find a different intellectual approach, one which was not 'archaeological or "scholarly"'. Pound's avowed aim was to find a 'literary scholarship, which will weigh Theocritus and Mr Yeats with one balance, and which will [...] give praise to beauty

before referring to an almanack' (1968: 5–6). Where Hulme found that the Canadian prairies refused to be included in a mathematical formula, Pound found that philology could not explain the beauty of his favourite poetry: both poets wanted to express something which existed beyond the reach of their empirical disciplines. Pound's introduction a year later of the 'method of Luminous Detail' as a 'New Method in Scholarship' proposed to replace the mass of information collected by the philologist with a single carefully selected detail that would unfold to reveal the culture that produced it. It is difficult to miss the similarities with the imagist poetry he began writing the following year, made up, like Hulme's, of isolated details, juxtaposed, and intended to yield 'an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time' (1960: 4).

In 1914, when Eliot showed Pound the poems later published as *Prufrock and Other Observations*, Pound expressed amazement that Eliot had 'modernised himself *on his own*' (1971: 40). But what did it mean to look modern in 1914? Eliot also wrote in free verse and privileged the closely observed detail. Evidently his work somehow expressed the same values Hulme and Pound associated with modern verse. This can be explained in part by a shared literary source, that of French symbolism, but the use of that source itself was conditioned by a common aim to express the relationship between experience and understanding. Eliot, like Hulme, knew Bergson's work in this area. But by 1914, his thinking was far more deeply indebted to the philosophy of F.H. Bradley. I will return to Bradley in Chapter 3, but it will be helpful here to briefly indicate some general correspondences between Eliot's use of his philosophy and the contemporaneous concerns of Hulme and Pound.

Like Hulme, Pound and Bergson, Bradley was interested in the problem of registering immediate experience, and like them, he believed it could only be understood through the practical compromise of abstract concepts, what he called 'appearances'. But Bradley was troubled by the implication that we are all locked into our individual consciousnesses, experiencing absolutely individuated sensations that cannot be accurately expressed to each other. Bradley's solution was that our individual consciousnesses only appear to be divided off from each other and in fact they are all part of a single, all-encompassing consciousness, which he called 'the Absolute'. While one can immediately see a certain correlation with Hulme's 'cinder theory', Bradley's Absolute indicates

a difference in emphasis: where Hulme emphasizes the plurality of the cinders, or the world, Bradley emphasizes its singularity and continuity. Like Hulme and Pound, Eliot is critically aware of the implications of this theory for the poet, who wants to express not appearances, but the immediacy of experience itself. Where Hulme's and Pound's response was to develop a concept of the verbal 'Image', which mediates between the real world of experience and the conscious world of appearances, Eliot developed a concept of the 'objective correlative', which he described as 'a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events' which can be 'the formula' of the emotion the poet wants to express (1980: 145). Although Eliot's objective correlative is not the same as the Hulmean or Poundian Image, it does suggest that these three poets agree on some important points. They agree that poetry aims to express experience, rather than the appearances or concepts by which we make experience intelligible to ourselves. They see that this creates a problem for language, since language tends to falsify experience, even as it enables us to express some approximation of it. Therefore, they think the poet needs to find some means of making language have a more direct impact on the reader, and the answer for all three of them is to create poetry around concrete details, which might act as a trigger or catalyst for experiencing the poem's subject directly.

The major point to emphasize is that, according to these poets, language cannot be understood as a transparent window through which one sees reality; it is a medium that is more likely to obscure reality. Their poetry will attempt to get behind language, as it were, by highlighting the mismatch between what we feel and what we can say. And, as we might expect, that decision will give rise to considerable difficulties not only for the poet, but for the reader too. As Eliot wrote in 1921:

It appears likely that poets in our civilization, as it exists at present, must be *difficult*. Our civilization comprehends great variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity, playing upon a refined sensibility, must produce various and complex results. The poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning.

(1980: 289)

The aim of this book is to explore Eliot, Hulme and Pound as critical thinkers, as well as poets, though of course those two identities

frequently converge. The chapters proceed roughly chronologically, tracing the development of the poets' thought and poetic practice from the beginning of their careers. The first chapter outlines the turn-of-the-century literary context in which these poets first began to write and to think about what it meant to be a 'modern' poet, and the second chapter provides the philosophical background for their early work. The third chapter addresses the poets' pre-war and wartime political thought and its relation to their poetry. The fourth and fifth chapters discuss the major theoretical issues Eliot and Pound confronted in composing their masterpieces, *The Waste Land* and *The Cantos*: Chapter 4 focuses on the poems' concepts of history and tradition and Chapter 5 is concerned with the modernist renovation of the long poem against the backdrop of the First World War. The sixth chapter discusses the later poetry of Eliot and Pound in the context of their social criticism.

NOTE ON DATES OF TEXTS

Dates of texts are given throughout as the date of first publication, rather than composition, unless otherwise stated.

KEY IDEAS

ORIGINS OF MODERNISM

Eliot, Hulme and Pound are emphatically twentieth-century writers and thinkers. They saw themselves as representative of the beginning of a new century, a century that was itself fascinated by its own modernity. The invention and popularization of the telephone, the cinema, the automobile and the aeroplane, together with what we might think of as intellectual inventions, such as Freud's psychoanalysis and Einstein's theory of relativity, transformed the cultural landscape and created what seemed to these writers to be a distinctively modern consciousness (Kern 1983: 1–2). They emphasized their own modernity repeatedly in their writings: Pound's maxim 'make it new' is probably the most frequent quotation from the period (1994: 265). But, at the same time, the very importance Eliot, Hulme and Pound attached to their contemporaneity suggests a reaction against something else, something they thought of as the 'not modern', as it were. An understanding of that 'not modern' will help to clarify what is at stake in these writers' claims to modernity, and in turn illuminate their poetic project. Therefore, this chapter will describe the late nineteenth-century literary culture against which Eliot, Hulme and Pound consciously reacted. But it will also explore the influence of that culture on their thinking and their poetry, and of particular significance here is the impact of a group of French poets known as the symbolists, whose work had a profound effect on all three writers. The chapter will

conclude by looking closely at an early and important prescription for modernist poetry, T.E. Hulme's 'A Lecture on Modern Poetry', delivered in 1908.

THE ANXIETY OF INFLUENCE

Even a cursory glance through the most well-known works of literary criticism by Eliot, Hulme and Pound will yield a series of statements that implicitly and explicitly oppose modernist poetry to its recent predecessors. In his 'Prolegomena' (1912), for example, Pound contrasts the achievements of the nineteenth century, 'a rather blurry, messy sort of a period, a rather sentimentalistic, mannerish sort of a period', with his hopes for twentieth-century poetry, which will, he predicts, 'move against poppy-cock, it will be harder and saner, [...] austere, direct, free from emotional slither' (1960: 11, 12). In 'Romanticism and Classicism' (written c. 1911/12), Hulme uses a very similar set of terms, comparing the 'dry and hard' poetry of the modern classicist with the over-emotional 'damp' poetry of the outmoded romantic (1994: 66), and that comparison underlies one of Eliot's most famous pronouncements, from 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' (1919): 'Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality' (1980: 21). This method of strong opposition is a powerful polemical tool that sharpens our understanding of the writers' claims for the poetry they are advocating. But it also simplifies the relationship between the opposing poles. These too-stark oppositions are the writers' strategies for managing and controlling a discussion that is always complicated, always intellectually and emotionally fraught: their own literary ancestry.

The American critic Harold Bloom coined the phrase 'the anxiety of influence' to describe modern poetry's engagement with its parentage. For Bloom, the history of Western poetry since the Renaissance is a history of 'anxiety and self-saving caricature, of distortion, of perverse, wilful revisionism without which modern poetry as such could not exist' (1973: 30). Eliot, Hulme and Pound were highly conscious of their poetry's relationship with literary tradition, and while their essays insist on their own originality, they also emphasize that originality in literature is compatible with learning from literary predecessors, and indeed displaying that learning. The most well-known articulation of this argument is Eliot's 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', which

appeared in his first collection of essays, *The Sacred Wood* (1920). There he writes that:

we shall often find that not only the best, but the most individual parts of [the poet's] work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously. And I do not mean the impressionable period of adolescence, but the period of full maturity.

(1980: 14)

Pound instructed new poets to 'be influenced by as many great artists as you can, but have the decency either to acknowledge the debt outright, or to try to conceal it' (1960: 5), and Hulme attested to the inevitability of poetic influence when he remarked that 'your opinion is almost entirely of the literary history that came just before you, and you are governed by that whatever you may think' (1994: 64).

That last statement of Hulme's is worth dwelling on for a moment, because it highlights the fact that, although these poets were prepared to acknowledge a remarkably wide range of influences on their poetry, they were not necessarily in control of the way their literary ancestry made itself felt in their work. In particular, during the early stages of their careers both Eliot and Pound wrote extensively about their interest in much earlier periods of literary history, seventeenth-century English drama in Eliot's case, thirteenth-century French and Italian poetry in Pound's, but they were far less forthcoming about the most immediate, the most inescapable, influence on their work, that of 'literary history that came just before': the literature of the late nineteenth-century 'aestheticist' movement. Although the negative characterizations of over-emotional poetry quoted above were general enough to be applied to all kinds of literature the writer disliked, the most immediate target was aestheticist poetry. Those over-stated oppositions are excellent examples of how Eliot's, Hulme's and Pound's anxiety about their recent literary heritage was expressed, in Bloom's words, as a 'self-saving caricature' of their literary parentage.

AESTHETICISM

The emergence of aestheticism in the second half of the nineteenth century can be read as a response to, and a rejection of, nineteenth-century industrialism and its accompanying philosophy, utilitarianism.

Aestheticism. Less a coherent movement than a way of thinking about art and culture that appeared first in France in the mid-nineteenth century, and subsequently in Britain from the 1860s, and America from the 1880s. Its doctrine is described by the slogan 'art for art's sake', a translation of a phrase that became current in France in the first half of the nineteenth century, '*l'art pour l'art*'. Aesthetes believed that art had no social responsibility, that it was an end in itself. The object of art and indeed of life for the aesthete was the appreciation and cultivation of beauty. Pre-eminent English aesthetes include the critic Walter Pater (1839–1894), the poet Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837–1909), and the playwright and essayist Oscar Wilde (1854–1900).

The Marxist cultural theorist Fredric Jameson has described aestheticism as a 'compensation for everything lost in the process of the development of capitalism', a way of insisting on the importance of quality in a world that seemed more interested in quantity, and of preserving 'the place of sheer color and intensity within the grayness of measurable extension and geometrical abstraction' (2002: 225). The aesthetes' commitment to the individual's perception of beauty therefore offered an alternative to the utilitarian aim of achieving 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number' (Bentham 1988: 3). Art, for the utilitarians, had a moral responsibility to assist social reform; in direct contradiction of this view, the aesthetes placed art outside all moral and even social considerations: art was the product of subjective experience and made for the artist's delight alone. As Oscar Wilde wrote, 'whenever a community or a powerful section of a community, or a government of any kind, attempts to dictate to the artist what he is to do, Art either entirely vanishes, or becomes stereotyped, or degenerates into a low and ignoble form of craft. A work of art is the unique result of a unique temperament' (2001: 141).

Modernism inherited much from aestheticism, and it is no wonder: aestheticism was the background against which Eliot, Hulme and Pound became artists. Though we know little of Hulme's literary interests as a teenager and student, Eliot's and Pound's early poems, letters and essays show their keen interest in writers of the aestheticist movement (Eliot 1996; Pound 1976). The importance of the poet Algernon Charles Swinburne was particularly deeply felt: in 1946, looking back on the

Utilitarianism. The theory of ethics first formulated by Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) and subsequently promoted by John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) and Henry Sidgwick (1838–1900), which judges all actions in terms of the amount they contribute to the sum of human happiness. It aimed (and aims) to provide a rational foundation for social and legal policy. In Bentham's formulation of the theory, an action's contribution to happiness is calculated by adding up the amount of pleasure it brings, minus the amount of pain it entails, erasing distinctions between different types of pleasure (a point Mill would later contest). This led Bentham to argue that 'the utility of all these arts and sciences, [...] the value which they possess, is exactly in proportion to the pleasure they yield', and that therefore, the child's game of 'push-pin' is 'of equal value with the arts and sciences of music and poetry'. Indeed, 'if the game of push-pin furnish more pleasure, it is more valuable than either' (Bentham 1825: 206).

challenges facing young poets at the beginning of the century, Eliot summed up, 'the question was still: where do we go from Swinburne? and the answer appeared to be nowhere' (1996: 388). Swinburne was the major inspiration, but it was not clear how one's own poetry could build on his achievements. Pound articulated the problem remarkably similarly in two early poems on Swinburne, 'Salve O Pontifex' and 'Swinburne: A Critique', in which he described Swinburne's style as 'Wondrous pattern leading nowhere' (1976: 40, 261).

Although Swinburne pervades the early verse of Eliot and Pound, both deliberately distanced themselves from his influence as they began to establish their careers. In Pound's case, the distancing was ambivalent: throughout his career he admired Swinburne as a translator and for the musical qualities of his verse. But he also thought that Swinburne produced 'inaccurate writing', that 'he neglected the value of words as words, and was intent on their value as sound' (1960: 293, 292), points made much more forcibly by Eliot in his two essays on Swinburne in *The Sacred Wood*. In the second of these, 'Swinburne as Poet', Eliot writes that in Swinburne's poetry, 'meaning is merely the hallucination of meaning, because language, uprooted, has adapted itself to an independent life of atmospheric nourishment' (1976: 149). The objection of both Pound and Eliot is that Swinburne's poetry is so intoxicated with the musicality of words that it neglects to pay proper attention

to their sense. Recent critics have argued vigorously and effectively against this judgement, but the modernist rejection of Swinburne was extremely damaging to his reputation during the twentieth century.

Swinburne died in London in 1909, the year after Pound moved to London, and five years before Eliot arrived there. The early deaths of a number of other leading members of the English aestheticist movement appeared to place that poetic era firmly in the past. However, one major poet who had identified himself with aestheticism was still in London, and still to produce his best work: the Irish poet and playwright, W.B. Yeats. Pound had studied the poetry of Yeats and his circle ('The Rhymers' Club') as a postgraduate student, and later claimed that he had come to London to 'sit at Yeats's feet, and learn what he knew' (Carpenter 1988: 93). Yeats, like Swinburne, had made experiments with poetic rhythm central to his verse, and he wrote and lectured extensively on the art of speaking poetry and the relationship between music and speech. This was particularly compelling to Pound, given his graduate research on the Provençal troubadours (poet-musicians) of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. But, despite sharing Swinburne's typically aestheticist interest in the music of poetry, Yeats was less vulnerable to the charge of 'inaccurate writing', because he was also well known as a theorist of 'symbolism' in poetry. In 'The Symbolism of Poetry' (1900), Yeats set out his understanding of how symbols work:

All sounds, all colours, all forms, either because of their preordained energies or because of long association, evoke indefinable and yet precise emotions, or, as I prefer to think, call down among us certain disembodied powers, whose footsteps over our hearts we call emotions; and when sound, and colour, and form are in a musical relation, a beautiful relation to one another, they become, as it were, one sound, one colour, one form, and evoke an emotion that is made out of their distinct evocations and yet is one emotion.

(1961a: 156–57)

Yeats uses the term 'symbol' in a deliberately wide-ranging fashion, to denote anything that can evoke an emotion; he acknowledges that outside the fields of mysticism (a great interest of his) and modern poetry, few people would give the same definition, preferring to reserve the term for what he calls 'intellectual symbols', that is, 'symbols that evoke ideas' rather than emotions (1961a: 160).

FRENCH SYMBOLISM

Despite the evident influence of English and Irish aestheticism on modernist poetry, Eliot, Hulme and Pound would all make much of their belief that, in Eliot's words, 'the kind of poetry that I needed to teach me the use of my own voice did not exist in English at all'. Though the three were, to varying degrees, acquainted with the literature of several other languages and cultures, the kind of poetry they needed, Eliot said, 'was only to be found in French' (1969b: 252). The French poetry he meant was that of the group known as the symbolists.

It was at Harvard in 1908 that Eliot came across one of the most influential books for modernist poetry, a book he credited with affecting 'the whole course of my life': *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1899) by the English aesthete poet and critic, Arthur Symons (1865–1945) (1996: 402). Symons's book consisted of eight essays on the French writers Gérard de Nerval (1808–1855), Villiers de L'Isle-Adam (1838–1889), Arthur Rimbaud (1854–1891), Paul Verlaine (1844–1896), Jules Laforgue (1860–1887), Stéphane Mallarmé (1842–1898), Joris-Karl Huysmans (1848–1907) and (the Belgian) Maurice Maeterlinck (1862–1949), together with his own introduction and conclusion. According to Symons, symbolism in literature is 'a form of expression, at the best but approximate, essentially but arbitrary [...], for an unseen reality apprehended by the consciousness'. Like Yeats, Symons defines symbolism very broadly, and the correspondence between their definitions is no accident. Symons dedicated *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* to Yeats (his erstwhile flatmate) as 'the chief representative' of symbolism in England, and Yeats's essay on 'The Symbolism of Poetry' begins with a very positive review of the book (Symons 1958: 1, xix).

The title of Symons's book and its definitions of symbolism attribute a coherence to the movement that is somewhat misleading. The manifesto that named the symbolist movement was published by a minor French poet, Jean Moréas (1856–1910), in 1886, but several of the most important symbolist writers had already produced their major works by 1880, and most critics would cite symbolism's origin as far back as Charles Baudelaire's volume of poetry *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1857). Similarly, though Moréas announced symbolism's death in 1891, it is usually understood to stretch into the twentieth century, in the poetry of Paul Claudel and Paul Valéry (Porter 1990: 14–16; Balakian 1982:

67). We should therefore think of symbolism as consisting of several overlapping groupings of poets (including Belgian, Swiss, Polish and American poets writing in French, as well as French poets), and different stages from the middle of the nineteenth century to the second decade of the twentieth century.

Given the span of time covered by symbolism and the number of poets who have been described as symbolists, it is not surprising that critics have found it difficult to agree on the movement's characteristics. Typically, however, symbolist poetry has been associated with musicality, obscurity, mystery, the use of free verse, and of course the use of symbols. Perhaps it is more useful, though, to adopt the definition provided by a recent critic, who has argued that the one unifying symbolist characteristic is a sense of a crisis in the effectiveness of language (Porter 1990: 20). This is where the particular importance of the symbol to this group of poets becomes clear: if language cannot adequately *describe* a thing or feeling or thought, a symbol may be able to *evoke* it obliquely. If you look back at the quotation from Yeats in the previous section, you'll see that 'evocation' is the key word in his definition of symbolism.

The symbolist sense of crisis was influentially explored by Stéphane Mallarmé in his essay 'Crisis in Poetry' (1886), which argues that language's inability to capture what Mallarmé variously refers to as 'the soul', 'the essence' of things, or 'Truth', has produced 'a fundamental and fascinating crisis in literature' (1956: 34, 37–38, 40). He explains that it is in order to resolve this crisis that symbolists have rejected

Free verse (also often referred to using the French term, *vers libre*). Term used to describe verse that departs from regular patterns of rhythm and rhyme. Although the French symbolist poet Gustave Kahn claimed to have invented free verse, it is not a modern invention: varieties exist in Latin, Greek and medieval verse. The beginning of its contemporary popularity is usually traced to the poetry of Walt Whitman (1819–1892) (in the United States), the symbolists (in France) and Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844–1889) (in England). Modernist poets, who wanted to abandon the artificial and ornamental in verse, argued that free verse enabled them to write poetry whose rhythms were closer to the patterns of speech.

traditional patterns of rhyme and metre in favour of free verse, and that their poems refuse description, in favour of evocation, allusion and suggestion. For Mallarmé, the very diversity of human languages indicates the shortcomings of all of them: the ‘supreme language’, the language that could fully represent Truth ‘is missing’ (1956: 38). But this pessimistic view of language is accompanied by a much more optimistic sense of the opportunity this presents to poetry. It is precisely because language is imperfect that poetry is important, Mallarmé argues, because poetry ‘atones for the sins of languages, comes nobly to their aid’ by supplying a representation of that which language itself cannot describe (1956: 38). It is in this sense that Mallarmé’s symbolist precursor, Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867), remarking that ‘everything is hieroglyphic’, called the poet ‘a translator, a decipherer’ (1964: 239). The poet deciphers the hieroglyphics of ‘Truth’, to use Mallarmé’s (somewhat problematic) word, and translates them into poetry.

LANGUAGE GAMES

Baudelaire’s use of the word ‘hieroglyphic’ here and Mallarmé’s comments about the imperfections of all languages are representative of changes in thinking about language during the nineteenth century. Both poets are drawing attention to the gap between language and experience (what we think or sense), a gap that was generating great interest among linguists and philosophers as knowledge of the relationships between different languages, especially ancient languages such as Sanskrit and Egyptian hieroglyphics, increased. Detailed comparisons of languages highlighted what we might call the materiality of language, its existence as a system, a set of rules and patterns, rather than a transparent or natural means of expression. This will sound familiar to readers of structuralist theory, and indeed structuralism grew out of this shift in nineteenth-century linguistic research: Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913) delivered the lectures that now make up the founding text of structuralist theory (*Course in General Linguistics*) from 1907–1911, the early years of modernism. Eliot and Pound had direct experience of the new emphasis in linguistic thought from their university studies: Eliot studied Sanskrit, Pound studied Romance languages. Hulme’s study of mathematics is relevant here too: mathematics, after all, is also expressed in a language whose signs and symbols are as arbitrarily assigned as letters and words.

The early poetry of Eliot, Hulme and Pound is preoccupied by this gap between language and experience. Like the symbolists, they draw attention to the limitations of language, at the same time as attempting to overcome those limitations. For example, Eliot's best-known early poem, 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' (written 1910–1911, published 1915), takes the failure of communication as its subject matter. In the first stanza, Prufrock walks through a cityscape at dusk (a typical symbolist scenario), where the details of the scene are represented in terms of language: streets are 'muttering retreats / of restless nights in cheap hotels', that 'follow like a tedious argument'. But what are the streets 'saying'? Something important: they 'lead you to an overwhelming question', but Prufrock and Eliot stop short of framing the question itself. The stanza ends: 'Oh, do not ask, "What is it?" / Let us go and make our visit'. The comic effect of these lines, created by their relative shortness in relation to the previous lines, the neatness of their rhyme, and their unstressed endings (*is it / visit*), dismisses language and replaces it with action: Prufrock leaves the street and enters the social world of the drawing room. The drawing room, too, is defined by language ('in the room the women come and go / Talking of Michelangelo'), but this repeated couplet seems to describe the 'wrong' kind of talk: the social, superficial chat of an unflatteringly generalized group of women (contrasted with the particularized Prufrock and Michelangelo). Language has become separated from experience: the overwhelming question cannot be asked here (1969a: 13).

While Eliot had found the distinctive voice he displays in 'Prufrock' by 1910, Pound's poetry experiments with a range of styles and voices for much longer. Two styles predominate: the first was modelled on the poetry of aesthetes such as William Morris (1834–1896), Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882) and Swinburne, and focussed on the portrayal of beauty. The second, rougher, more vigorous, style was modelled on the poetry of the medieval troubadours and Robert Browning (1812–1889), and often takes the form of a dramatic monologue. For most of his career, Pound allowed only the poems in the second category to be republished, calling the others 'stale cream-puffs' (1965: [7]). From 1911, however, Pound's own voice begins to become more distinct and 'The Return' (1912), for example, contains elements of both youthful styles. Yeats described this poem as 'the most beautiful poem that has been written in the free form' (Carpenter 1988: 174), though Pound stated that it was actually a version of a

classical metre known as Sapphics, after the ancient Greek poet Sappho, also used in English by Swinburne. Though usually interpreted as concerning the relationship of ancient gods with the modern age, the poem begins by drawing an extended analogy between the return of the gods and the poem's own metrical experiments: 'see the tentative / Movements, and the slow feet', Pound writes, 'The trouble in the pace and the uncertain / Wavering!' (1990: 74). What Pound is doing here is using rhythm to describe the scenario itself. He uses a combination of long vowels and punctuation to keep the pace of the stanza slow, but he also interrupts it with that three-syllable staccato 'tentative' at the end of the first line, which holds us just a little too long there, so that we're made to enact the word itself. Rather than simply describing the hesitant return of the gods, then, Pound reproduces their movement: he manipulates the poem's rhythm to close the gap between language and experience.

Pound appears to have only begun to read the symbolists seriously in 1912, though his close study of Browning provided some of the lessons Eliot had learned from Laforgue. Hulme, however, had encountered the work of the symbolists as early 1905 or 1906, and from 1908 he published short free verse poems in imitation (1994: 57). 'Autumn' (1909) evokes the mood of an autumn night through two sharp images: the moon is 'like a red-faced farmer', the stars have 'white faces like town children'. Though not as accomplished as either Eliot's or Pound's poems, it shares the precision of their writing and distrust of language: Hulme's speaker tells us that he 'did not stop to speak, but nodded' to the moon – he is as taciturn as Prufrock (1994: 3).

We can see the aestheticist and symbolist heritage of these poems in the way they evoke meaning without recourse to description. None

Dramatic monologue. A poem presented as a speech by a fictional figure to an (unspeaking) listener, often at a moment of crisis. As in a theatrical monologue, the speaker's character is revealed not only directly (through what the speaker says), but also indirectly (through how it is said, and what is not said). Much rests, therefore, on the reader's interpretation. The form is associated particularly with the Victorian poet, Robert Browning.

of the poems lends itself to simple summary of content, there is no ‘story’ to tell; yet they all convey a mood, a tone, through the combination of experiments in rhythm and striking images. We may not know what Prufrock looks like (apart from that he is slightly bald), but the images he presents of himself, ‘formulated, sprawling on a pin’, or transformed into ‘a pair of ragged claws / Scuttling across the floors of silent seas’, evoke his social alienation more vividly than straightforward description could (1969a: 14, 15).

HULME'S 'A LECTURE ON MODERN POETRY'

T.E. Hulme's ‘A Lecture on Modern Poetry’ (1908) records this transitional moment, where a recognizably modernist poetry emerges from nineteenth-century aestheticism. It was composed and delivered at an early stage of modernism's development and is a very clear example of how modernist poets tussled with their recent poetic past to establish what they saw as a distinctively modern poetry. If we want to know what kind of poetry Eliot, Hulme and Pound thought of as modern when they embarked on their careers, this lecture is an excellent starting point.

Hulme writes that he began to compose poetry because ‘there were certain impressions which I wanted to fix’. However, no existing form seemed to him to be suitable until he encountered symbolist free verse (1994: 50). Drawing on an essay by the French symbolist Gustave Kahn, he argues that periods of intense poetic activity are brought about not by social or political changes, but by the invention of new verse forms that can express the age. Free verse, Hulme writes, is particularly suited to the expression of modern life and the modern sensibility – and his definitions of these are highly instructive. He distinguishes between ‘the old poetry’, written in the metrically regular epic or ballad forms and concerned with heroic action, and modern poetry that ‘has become definitely and finally introspective and deals with expression and communication of momentary phases in the poet's mind’ (1994: 52, 53). Clearly, this is a polemical distinction and Hulme's description of ‘old poetry’ is deliberately unspecific, but his connecting of the modern with the expression of individual consciousness immediately alerts us to the aestheticist and symbolist heritage of this passage.

But what would Hulme's ‘modern poetry’ actually look like? He has established that it would be composed in free verse, but he also,

towards the end of the lecture, emphasizes the importance that the poetic image will play. Hulme's modern poetry will apparently be made up entirely of images, piled up, he says, in different lines. This method is designed to convey the intensity of the poet's experience to the reader with the greatest immediacy possible. In this way, he argues, poetry is the 'direct language' because it 'arrests your mind all the time with a picture'. Prose, on the other hand, is an 'indirect language' made up of images once fresh, but now decayed into conventions and clichés. 'One might say that images are born in poetry', Hulme writes, 'They are used in prose, and finally die a long lingering death in journalists' English' (1994: 55). In this statement, Hulme not only elevates poetry over prose, he also hints at one of the reasons he does so. For many literary figures of the period, journalism was the enemy, a utilitarian way of writing that transmitted information (or disinformation) with little interest in intellectual subtleties or style. Hulme's comparison between journalism and poetry alerts us to the fact that his whole lecture might be understood as an ambitious attempt to carve out a new place for poetry (rather than the novel or the newspaper) as the privileged expression of the modern mind. Hulme hopes that modernist poetry, like aestheticism before it, will preserve 'the place of sheer color and intensity' from the utilitarian drive of the journalist (Jameson 2002: 225).

SUMMARY

In this chapter we have seen how modernism, despite its insistence on its own modernity and originality, was deeply indebted to nineteenth-century aestheticism and, in particular, French symbolism. Aesthetes and symbolists reacted against the utilitarian belief that art should be moral by developing the doctrine of 'art for art's sake' and their poetry focussed on the evocation of emotions rather than the description of ideas or moral narratives. The modernists inherited the desire to create poetry that would exceed the limitations of language, and their early writing aims to achieve this through the use of vivid images and experiments in rhythm enabled by the use of free verse.

PHILOSOPHICAL DETAILS

THE IMAGE AND THE OBJECTIVE CORRELATIVE

One of the most influential aspects of Eliot's, Hulme's and Pound's poetry was their reinterpretation of the symbolists' use of the poetic symbol to form new building blocks for modernist poetry. Hulme and Pound referred to their versions of the symbol as the 'image' or 'Image', and in 1912 Pound founded 'imaging', a movement Eliot later called 'the starting-point of modern poetry' (1978: 58). Although Eliot was not in London during the development of imaging, his education in the United States and France introduced him to some of the philosophical ideas that informed it. So it is not entirely surprising that his own version of the symbolists' symbol, which he named 'the objective correlative', has much in common with the Hulmean and Poundian Image. This chapter examines the philosophical ideas behind the Image and the objective correlative, focussing in particular on the influence of the philosophers Henri Bergson and F.H. Bradley.

HULME AND BERGSON

On 11 February 1909 the poet F.S. Flint reviewed Hulme's poetry in a journal called *The New Age*. Hulme had published two poems in a collection of verse by the Poets' Club, a group of well-respected members of London's literary establishment. Flint compared this collection with some recent work by the French symbolists, but it was

not a favourable comparison. While Flint praised the symbolists as ‘pioneers’ and ‘craftsmen’, he poured scorn on the members of the Poets’ Club as a band of ‘rhy mesters’ more interested in dining than writing poetry. Flint did, however, pick out a small number of contributions as noteworthy, including Hulme’s ‘Autumn’ (1909: 327). Hulme promptly left the Poets’ Club to found a new poetry group with Flint where, according to Flint, the focus of discussion and poetic experimentation was French free verse, Japanese poetry (then very much in vogue) and ‘what we called the “Image”’ (1915: 71). Pound joined this group on 22 April 1909.

To understand what Hulme and Flint’s ‘Secession Club’, as it has come to be known, understood by the Image and its relation to poetry, we need to look more broadly at Hulme’s activities in 1909. In July, Hulme followed Flint into *The New Age*’s pages, but rather than writing on poetry, he became the journal’s commentator on contemporary philosophy. In particular, his articles promoted the theories of Henri Bergson (1859–1941), who, like Hulme, had had a mathematical background, but had come to believe that, while mathematics and its related sciences could make useful statements about the external world, its procedures were unable to reveal anything about the essential nature of reality, especially the reality of human consciousness. His philosophy addressed that topic.

In his first two books, *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (translated as *Time and Free Will*) (1889) and *Matière et mémoire* (*Matter and Memory*) (1896), Bergson argued that positivist science was not only limited in its ability to describe human consciousness, its influence had actually hindered our understanding of it. He claimed that the method of perceiving and understanding the physical world by breaking it down into analysable units could not be applied to consciousness without falsifying its real character. One of the analogies he used to explain this complex idea was the analogy of a bell striking. We can listen to the bell’s strokes in two distinct ways, explained Bergson: we can either count the chimes as distinct, comparable elements in a series, or we can attend to the series as a whole, as if it were a musical piece. The first approach involves separating out the sounds and classifying them as sound elements of the same kind, repressing any difference between the sounds or our impression of them. This approach only records the *quantity* of the chimes. The second approach registers the way in which the sound of each chime is carried over to combine and

modify the sound of the successive ones, creating a unified overall effect. This approach records the *quality* of the chimes. Bergson argues that, while we tend to think of our consciousness in the first way, as a series of discrete moments, it would be more accurate to describe it in the second way, as a succession of moments that interpenetrate each other and form an indivisible whole. Our memory of each moment, our experience of each state of our consciousness, is carried forward and colours future experiences. In this sense, we can never see even an everyday physical object – a chair, a table, a vase – in the same way twice, because our memory of our first impression of it modifies the second impression. Bergson calls this continuity that characterizes our consciousness ‘real duration’ (Bergson 2002: 53–54; Schwartz 1992: 282–83).

In his next work, an essay entitled ‘Introduction à la métaphysique’ (‘An Introduction to Metaphysics’) (1903), which Hulme translated, Bergson extended his concept of ‘real duration’ from consciousness to the external world. The key opposition in this work is no longer between the external world of stable objects and the internal flux of consciousness, but rather between the faculties by which we perceive reality. The intellect, argues Bergson, is a practical tool that enables us to understand reality by dividing it up and ordering it. The intuition, however, enables us to grasp reality in its actual state of flux. But how can we register our intuitions without imposing the structure of the intellect upon them? In *Time and Free Will*, Bergson had noted the inability of language to apprehend consciousness: ‘the rough and ready word, which stores up the stable, common, and consequently impersonal element in the impressions of mankind, overwhelms or at least covers over the delicate

Positivism. Strictly, the philosophical school deriving from the work of the French philosopher, Auguste Comte (1798–1857). More generally used to describe the philosophical belief that knowledge is confined to the ‘positive’ data of sensory experience, and that all speculations about reality not based on such evidence must be rejected. It therefore privileges the knowledge produced by science and mathematics. In its emphasis on human, rather than religious, experience positivism is closely related to utilitarianism.

and fugitive impressions of our individual consciousness' (2002: 74). In 'An Introduction to Metaphysics' he introduces the idea that language can more effectively express duration if abstract concepts are replaced with 'images': 'no image can replace the intuition of duration', Bergson writes, 'but many diverse images, borrowed from very different orders of things, may, by the convergence of their action, direct consciousness to the precise point where there is a certain intuition to be seized' (1913: 14). For Bergson, poets are especially adept at conveying this process (1910: 15).

In this last quotation from Bergson we might notice a correspondence with the way the symbolists used the symbol to evoke a reality they believed language could not represent directly. Certainly, this correspondence struck Bergson's French critics, who frequently related his philosophy to symbolist poetry, and Hulme himself remarked that 'the spirit which finds expression in the Symboliste movement in poetry is the same as that represented by Bergson in philosophy' (1994: 58). For Hulme, Bergson's philosophy justified his own belief that poetry could access reality more precisely and powerfully than other forms of writing, and in his third essay for *The New Age* he described the difference between poetry and prose in very Bergsonian terms. 'Poetry', he wrote:

is not a counter language, but a visual concrete one. It is a compromise for a language of intuition which would hand over sensations bodily. It always endeavours to arrest you and to make you continuously see a physical thing, to prevent you gliding through an abstract process. It chooses fresh epithets and fresh metaphors, not so much because they are new and we are tired of the old, but because the old cease to convey a physical thing and become abstract counters. Nowadays, when one sees the hill is 'clothed' with trees, the word suggests no physical comparison. To get the original visual effect one would have to say 'ruffed', or use some new metaphor [...]. Images in verse are not mere decoration, but the very essence of an intuitive language.

(1994: 95)

We can see Hulme's Bergsonian ideas about poetry in practice if we turn to his poem 'Above the Dock' (1912):

Above the quiet dock in mid night,
Tangled in the tall mast's corded height,

Hangs the moon. What seemed so far away
Is but a child's balloon, forgotten after play.

(1994: 3)

Like 'Autumn', the poem has a very traditional subject: the moon in the night sky. But Hulme departs from traditional treatments of the subject, such as those that muse on female beauty or love. Hulme's interest here is not in the associations the moon has for us, the moon as 'an abstract counter' that means beauty or love. Instead, Hulme wants us to see the moon itself as if for the first time, to get the 'original visual effect'. To achieve this he finds a 'fresh metaphor', that of the child's balloon. This everyday reference has the effect of undercutting the romantic, poetic associations of the moon: it helps us to focus on the moon as a 'physical thing'. Hulme's use of the poetic image is a specifically Bergsonian attempt to convey intuitions of reality.

Hulme published only six poems in his lifetime; a handful more were published after his death. Though Eliot considered him 'a really great poet' (1988: 311), his significance as a writer rests less on his poetic achievement than on his reputation as the inspiration behind the imagist movement.

POUND AND IMAGISM

Although Pound later claimed Hulme's importance for imagism had been overstated, his first public announcement of the new movement nevertheless accorded Hulme a paternal role. Pound's sixth collection of poetry, *Ripostes* (1912), contained an appendix of five poems entitled 'The Complete Poetical Works of T.E. Hulme', which Pound introduced with a jocular note. Though not entirely complimentary, it described the imagists as 'the descendants' of Hulme's 'Secession Club' (1990: 251). In his 'History of Imagism' (1915), F.S. Flint reiterated the connection to Hulme (1915: 71).

'Imagism' was coined by Pound as a marketing ploy for poetry by himself and his friends H.D. (Hilda Doolittle) (1886–1961) and Richard Aldington (1892–1962). Early announcements used French forms, 'Les Imagistes' and 'Imagisme', to underline a comparison with contemporary French post-symbolist movements, such as *unanimisme* and *impulsionnisme*. The ploy was successful: the imagists were published to considerable controversy in the United States by *Poetry* and in England

by *The New Freewoman* (later *The Egoist*), and four anthologies of their poetry appeared between 1914 and 1917. Pound, however, only appeared in the first anthology, *Des Imagistes*, arguing that the movement's original ideas were being diluted by some of its new associates. The subsequent anthologies were edited by the American poet, Amy Lowell (1874–1925), and a fifth and final anthology appeared in 1930, edited by Aldington.

The original imagist ideas upon which Pound insisted were summarized in three 'principles' published in *Poetry* in March 1913:

1. Direct treatment of the 'thing' whether subjective or objective.
2. To use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation.
3. As regarding rhythm: to compose in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome.

(1960: 3)

The correspondence with Hulme's earlier prescriptions for modern poetry is striking. For Pound, as for Hulme in 'A Lecture on Modern Poetry', good poetry is 'direct'. Both poets also emphasize economy and lack of ornamentation. And Pound's third point suggests that the imagist is more likely to write in free verse than a traditional metre: the imagist poem must not be constrained, at least, by the metre used.

It is more difficult to ascertain how far the specifically Bergsonian aspect of Hulme's image is carried over to Pound's. Pound was never an enthusiastic Bergsonian himself, but there is a Bergsonian residue in his main definition of the Image (unlike Hulme and Bergson, he referred to it using a capital 'I'). In the same March 1913 issue of *Poetry* he wrote, 'An "Image" is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time', and elaborated, 'it is the presentation of such a "complex" instantaneously which gives that sense of sudden liberation; that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits' (1960: 4). This comes very close to Bergson's idea that images can create a moment of intuition that apprehends reality directly, though Pound attributes his use of the term 'complex' to a contemporary psychologist, Bernard Hart (never mentioned again in Pound's writings). Pound also follows both Hulme and Bergson in describing images as 'concrete' rather than 'abstract'. At the same time, there is an important, if subtle, difference here. When Hulme and Bergson refer to the image they use the term conventionally, describing a visual image like the

child's balloon Hulme conjures up in 'Above the Dock'. For Pound, however, the Image is not a visual description, it is 'an intellectual and emotional complex': the Image is that which the visual description produces. It is what Hulme and Bergson refer to as the intuition.

This can be explained most clearly by looking at Pound's 'In a Station of the Metro' (1913), originally published with the following typography:

The apparition of these faces in the crowd :

Petals on a wet, black bough .

(1990: 109)

Like Hulme's 'Autumn' and 'Above the Dock', the poem's success is dependent on a central metaphor: here, faces seen as petals. The poem has its effect when the reader brings the two images together and sees one in terms of the other. But where does this happen? The reader pictures the first scenario, faces appearing out of a crowd; then pictures the second, the petals stuck to a black tree branch. Only then can the effect take place: at the end of the poem the reader superimposes faces on petals, petals on faces. Unlike most poems, the effect of 'In a Station of the Metro' is not cumulative, but sudden, and it occurs outside the words themselves. This is underlined by the text's innovative typography (unusual in Pound's imagist poems, but a feature of *The Cantos*), which breaks the poem into discrete visual elements.

The point I want to stress here is that, although the poem is made up of visual images (faces, petals, the bough), what Pound designated the 'Image' is the effect that happens after the poem. He made this explicit in a famous account of the poem's composition, where he describes how he came out of a Paris metro station and encountered a crowd of beautiful faces. When it came to expressing the experience, however, he could imagine no verbal equivalent, only 'little splotches of colour'. But, just as Hulme felt able to express the experience of the Canadian steppes only when he encountered the free verse form of the French symbolists, Pound's breakthrough occurred when he turned from his usual poetic models to Japanese haiku. It was the example of this form, Pound wrote, that helped him to create this archetypal imagist poem, a poem which records 'the precise instant when a thing outward and objective transforms itself, or darts into a thing inward and subjective' (1970a: 89).

Haiku. Japanese poetic form that consists of seventeen syllables arranged in three lines of five, seven, and five syllables. The traditional, pre-nineteenth-century form ('*hokku*') often juxtaposes two distinct elements to create a single impression, a practice carried over into many modern haiku, too.

So far I have emphasized imagism's symbolist ancestry, but as 'In a Station of the Metro' demonstrates, the imagists were not only influenced by recent French poetry. A number of Pound's poems draw more or less loosely on Japanese and Chinese poetry. 'Liu Ch'e' and 'Fan-Piece, for Her Imperial Lord', for example, rework English translations of Chinese poems by Liu Che and Pan Chieh-yu respectively, and 'Gentildonna' and 'The Encounter' are a more general response to the lingering *fin-de-siècle* fashion for *japonisme* and *chinoiserie*. H.D.'s and Aldington's verse reflects a close engagement with the poetry of ancient Greece (and late romantic interpretations of it); Pound also draws on the classics: Latin models were especially important for his more satirical imagist poems.

Though detractors read imagism's imitations of literary models as evidence of their lack of originality, they should be read more positively. They signify the importance the imagists attached to their self-training in poetic technique. Pound's infamous 'A Few Don'ts' (1913) for the aspiring imagist stressed that an imagist poem was not only the product of intuition; it required formidable erudition and hard work. Under the heading 'Rhythm and Rhyme', Pound instructed his reader to:

fill his mind with the finest cadences he can discover, preferably in a foreign language, [...] e.g. Saxon charms, Hebridean Folk Songs, the verse of Dante, and the lyrics of Shakespeare – if he can dissociate the vocabulary from the cadence. Let him dissect the lyrics of Goethe coldly into their component sound values, syllables long and short, stressed and unstressed, into vowels and consonants.

(1960: 5)

As the vocabulary of that last sentence suggests, Pound frequently compared the poet to the scientist, who is expected to have a rigorous knowledge of the subject before being allowed to practice science.

ELIOT AND BERGSON

After completing his undergraduate and Master's degrees at Harvard, Eliot spent the year 1910–1911 in Paris, during which time he attended Bergson's lectures at the Collège de France. He later admitted to a 'temporary conversion to Bergsonism' (1948b: 5), and Bergson was the subject of one of the papers he wrote after returning to Harvard to study for his doctorate in philosophy. The paper criticizes what Eliot sees as inconsistencies in Bergson's philosophy, particularly Bergson's attempt to reconcile idealism and realism by locating reality in neither the consciousness nor the external world, but in the tension between the two. For Eliot, only one or the other could logically be true (Habib 1999: 49–54).

Despite this major disagreement, Bergson's legacy can be discerned in Eliot's writings, especially in the poems he wrote while in Paris. 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night' (written 1911, published 1915) is the most frequently cited example of Bergson's influence. In this poem, the speaker, or more precisely, the thinker, moves through a sordid symbolist cityscape, letting his mind flit between observations of his environment and memories they suggest. The thinker appears to enact Bergson's theory of memory, in which images from the past 'must constantly mingle with our perception of the present, and may even take its place' (Bergson 1988: 66; Childs 2001: 19). So, Eliot writes, the night 'dissolve[s]'

the floors of memory
And all its clear relations,
Its divisions and precisions.

The sight of a prostitute in a doorway is the cue for a chain of memories, 'a twisted branch upon the beach', 'a broken spring in a factory yard'. By the fourth stanza, the remembered details are as vivid as those seen: a cat lit up by a street lamp 'Slips out its tongue / And devours a morsel of rancid butter', which recalls 'the hand of the child, automatic' which 'pocketed a toy that was running along the quay' and a crab that 'Gripped the end of a stick which I held him'. At the end of the poem the street lamp calls the thinker back from his reverie, and he is confronted by the accoutrements of everyday external life: 'The bed is open; the tooth-brush hangs on the wall, / Put your shoes at the

door, sleep, prepare for life'. The triviality and, especially, the mechanization expressed in the latter line represent for the thinker 'The last twist of the knife' (1969a: 24–26; Childs 2001: 62).

ELIOT AND BRADLEY

Eliot's critique of Bergson in his Harvard essay shows the early influence of the philosopher who would become the topic of Eliot's doctoral dissertation: the English idealist, F.H. Bradley (1846–1924). In 1914 Eliot was awarded a fellowship to work on his dissertation in Oxford under the tuition of Harold Joachim, one of Bradley's disciples. The dissertation, which focussed on Bradley's 1893 book, *Appearance and Reality*, was completed under the title 'Experience and the Objects of Knowledge in the Philosophy of F.H. Bradley' and sent to Harvard in 1916, by which time Eliot had moved to London and begun to publish his poetry with the help of Pound. Harvard approved the dissertation: Eliot's dissertation supervisor called it 'the work of an expert' (Jain 1992: 30). However, Eliot did not return to Harvard for the necessary oral examination of his dissertation (it was, after all, the middle of the First World War), and the degree of PhD was not awarded. When the dissertation was published in 1964, it was argued that Eliot's philosophical work illuminated his poetry and criticism. More recently, critics have warned against transferring the arguments of Eliot's dissertation to his literary work, pointing out that to do so belies the dissertation's scepticism about philosophical truth itself (Menand 1987: 43). Such a transferral also, of course, fails to acknowledge any substantial development in Eliot's thought after 1916. Keeping these warnings in mind, the rest of this chapter will set out the chief elements of Bradley's philosophy, and of Eliot's response to it in his dissertation, and finally suggest how we might make careful use of it in thinking about one aspect of his literary criticism.

Like Bergson's, Bradley's philosophy concerns the relationship between the mind and reality. Also like Bergson's, its approach is directed against positivism. For Bradley, the starting point of all knowledge is 'immediate experience', a term he used technically to denote the 'general condition before distinctions and relations have been developed' (1897: 459). In its unified, unordered state, 'immediate experience' is reminiscent of Bergson's 'real duration'. Similarly, his characterization of the world of 'appearance' as that where experience

Idealism. Philosophical idealists believe that reality is fundamentally mental rather than physical: the only reality we can know is the reality presented to us by our minds. Among the varieties of philosophical idealism are subjective idealism (for example, in the philosophy of George Berkeley (1685–1753)), in which reality is constructed by the perceptions of the individual mind; transcendental idealism (for example, in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant (1724–1804)), in which what we can know of reality is limited to that which our minds are equipped to categorize; and absolute idealism (for example, in the philosophy of Georg Wilhelm Hegel (1770–1831)), in which reality is the construction of a universal mind or interpersonal consciousness, rather than the individual consciousness of the subjective idealist.

is broken up into thoughts and concepts has much in common with Bergson's portrayal of the work of the intellect: for both, our everyday world of common sense thought is a construction that conceals reality. But Bradley's work is fundamentally different from Bergson's in that it does not understand the self as the foundation of reality. Where Bergson holds the view that reality resides in the real duration of our individual consciousness (in this aspect of his philosophy he is a subjective idealist), Bradley argues that there is a reality that transcends the individual (making him an absolute idealist). He locates this transcendent reality in a third stage of experience, which he calls 'the Absolute'. In the experience of the Absolute, 'immediate experience' and the conceptual ordering of immediate experience are synthesized into a harmonious, unified whole. It was this last stage of Bradley's argument that drew most criticism from his contemporaries: Bradley himself admitted that the Absolute is unknowable, but argued that it is intellectually necessary that it exists.

While Eliot's dissertation accepted certain aspects of Bradley's philosophy, it was also critical of some of its most important concepts. Eliot accepts Bradley's relativist perspective on reality: it is not possible to find a fundamental separation between the real and the ideal (and the ideal, Eliot notes, includes the unreal) (1964a: 36). When we say that these concepts are separate, we do so because it is practically useful to do so, rather than because it is so. Eliot gives the example

of ‘the round square’, which is imaginary, but which is also a real idea: ‘It is not unreal, for there is no reality to which it should correspond and does not’ (1964a: 55). Any separation we claim between reality and unreality is relative, that is, it depends on our point of view.

Eliot is much more critical of Bradley’s categories of immediate experience and the Absolute, and for the same reasons that he had criticized Bergson’s philosophy. According to Eliot, the distinction between the two strata of experience that both philosophers posit, the unordered strata of immediate experience (Bradley) or real duration (Bergson) and the ordered world of appearance (Bradley) and the intellect (Bergson), is false: ‘the line between the experienced, or the given, and the constructed can nowhere be clearly drawn’ (1964a: 18). Eliot argues that feeling never occurs without thought, indeed he writes that ‘there is no greater mistake than to think that feeling and thought are exclusive – that those beings which think most and best are not also those capable of the most feeling’ (1964a: 18). He therefore refuses the starting point of both Bergson’s and Bradley’s philosophies, that rational thought can be peeled away from the feelings and sensations on which it works. According to Eliot, we cannot know that there is a pre-rational realm.

Furthermore, he argues that since we cannot know the pre-rational realm Bergson and Bradley describe, it should not be taken as a foundation for a theory of knowledge. Immediate experience is only a hypothesis, argues Eliot, and therefore inadequate grounding for the edifice Bradley builds upon it. The same is true for the concept of the Absolute. Once again, this is a hypothesis, argues Eliot, not reality. In an essay published six months after he completed his dissertation, Eliot highlights this limitation of Bradley’s philosophy: ‘Bradley’s universe [. . .] is only by an act of faith unified. Upon inspection it falls away into the isolated finite experiences out of which it is put together [. . .]. Pretending to be something which makes finite centres cohere, it turns out to be merely the assertion that they do’ (1964a: 202). Metaphysical systems such as those constructed by Bradley and Bergson, he decides, cannot describe reality, because as soon as one defines an experience, one substitutes the definition for the experience. All theories, then, are a movement away from experience, and involve interpretations and judgements that make the theory more and more personal to the theorist. So the process of building connections between experiences the theorist must enact to build a theory of reality is not,

as the theorist thinks, the process of reality, ‘the process is perhaps only the process of the builder’s thought’ (1964a: 167).

This does not amount to a wholesale rejection of Bradley’s philosophy, and in fact Eliot concludes his thesis by remarking that ‘I believe that all the conclusions that I have reached are in substantial agreement with *Appearance and Reality*’ (1964a: 153). But his argument has led him to be highly sceptical about whether a philosophy of reality can be verified through its correspondence to experienced reality, the only reality we can know, in Eliot’s view. Hence his belief that a philosophy can be founded on nothing but faith, and hence – despite his scepticism of the Absolute’s reality – his agreement with Bradley that we are impelled towards such a unifying concept (1964a: 169).

THE OBJECTIVE CORRELATIVE

The philosophies of both Bergson and Bradley inform Eliot’s concept of the ‘objective correlative’. Though it was not the first use of the term or the idea, Eliot’s formulation, in ‘Hamlet and his Problems’ (later renamed ‘Hamlet’) (1919), was certainly the most influential. Arguing that *Hamlet* is not Shakespeare’s masterpiece, but in fact an ‘artistic failure’, Eliot locates that failure in Shakespeare’s inability to express ‘the essential emotion of the play’, which he takes to be Hamlet’s feelings about the guilt of his mother:

The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an ‘objective correlative’; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked.

(1976: 100)

Hamlet is disgusted by his mother, writes Eliot, but his mother is not ‘an adequate equivalent’ for his disgust. In contrast, in the ‘more successful’ *Macbeth*, the state of mind of Lady Macbeth walking in her sleep is conveyed by an ‘accumulation of imagined sensory expressions’ (1976: 100). The sensory expressions are an adequate equivalent for her state of mind. In his dissertation, Eliot had discussed Bradley’s argument that emotion is never purely subjective, it is always inevitably connected to that which stimulated it (its object), and ‘is ultimately

just as objective'. Anticipating the terms of the passage quoted above, Eliot comments in his dissertation that 'Hence when the object, or complex of objects, is recalled, the pleasure is recalled in the same way' (1964a: 80). Bergson had made a similar point in *Time and Free Will* when describing the power of the poetic image: 'In seeing these images pass before our eyes we in our turn experience the feeling which was, so to speak, their emotional equivalent' (1910: 15). Thus, in 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night', we might see the chain of memories set off by the prostitute and the cat as an early example of the objective correlative.

However, by the time Eliot wrote 'Hamlet and his Problems', he had become more remote philosophically from Bradley and Bergson through the influence of the English analytic philosopher, Bertrand Russell (1872–1970). Eliot had taken Russell's course on Symbolic Logic at Harvard in 1914, but he became much more influenced by Russell's philosophy after he had moved to England and developed a close friendship with the philosopher (Eliot and his wife Vivien lived with Russell during 1915). Russell's analytic philosophy, with its scientific methodologies and emphasis on empirical fact, contrasted strongly with Bradley's, and Eliot's early literary criticism, written in the years following the completion of his dissertation, shows a marked turn from Bradley's theory of knowledge through interpretation towards Russell's theory of knowledge based on analysis of facts. In his dissertation, Eliot had privileged the subjective – 'all significant truths are private truths', he wrote in his conclusion – yet his literary criticism is notable for its insistence on objectivity (1964a: 165).

SUMMARY

In this chapter we have considered the philosophical influences on Eliot's, Hulme's and Pound's concepts of the objective correlative and the Image. All three poets are concerned with the problem of conveying internal or emotional life in poetry, and all three solve the problem by focussing their poetry around the precise description of external objects, designed to trigger an emotional effect in the reader. The poet is charged with the role of intensifying language, of combating its everyday, utilitarian usage.

ANTI-DEMOCRACY

THE POLITICS OF EARLY MODERNISM

In the previous two chapters, we have looked at the literary and philosophical backgrounds to Eliot's, Hulme's and Pound's poetry. This chapter is the first of two that focus explicitly on their political backgrounds (the other is Chapter 6). Until quite recently there were relatively few critical discussions of early modernist literature's politics: the aestheticist ancestry of early modernist verse and its lack of direct reference to contemporary events meant that it was often read as apolitical or antipolitical. Recently, however, critics have paid more attention to modernists' pre-war political beliefs and discovered that certain stylistic characteristics of their poetry were motivated by political, as well as literary and philosophical, considerations. These considerations can be broadly described as anti-democratic, though Pound's version of anti-democracy is quite different from that of Hulme and Eliot.

MODERNIST CLASSICISM

'I want to maintain that after a hundred years of romanticism, we are in for a classical revival', declared Hulme (1994: 59). In the last chapter we saw that Pound, H.D. and Aldington looked to the Greek and Roman classics as one of several models for imagism. In this sense, an affinity with classicism was built into the imagist strand of modernist poetry from its beginning. But Eliot and Hulme use 'classicism' with

a somewhat different force. When they use the term, they are not referring to the direct influence of Greek and Roman authors; rather, they are alluding to a set of politicized characteristics, summarized by Eliot as '*form* and *restraint* in art, *discipline* and *authority* in religion, *centralization* in government' (Schuchard 1999: 27).

While the characteristics Eliot lists were loosely associated with ancient Greece and Rome, this particular definition of classicism has a specifically late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century resonance. The clearest account of modernist classicism is Hulme's lecture-essay 'Romanticism and Classicism' (written c. 1911–1912). For Hulme, classicism and romanticism are essentially opposed beliefs about human nature: the romantic, he says, believes in the infinite potential of the individual and thinks that laws and rules inhibit and distort the individual's innate goodness. The classicist, on the other hand, believes that man is a limited being who requires organization and restraint in order to achieve anything of any value (1994: 61). Hulme declares himself in favour of the Church, not simply because it provides rules to live by, but because its doctrine of original sin corresponds to the classicist's view that man is naturally sinful, not naturally good. In fact, Hulme sees romanticism as the misdirection of religious impulses into the human sphere: instead of believing in God, the romanticist turns man into a god. In typically pithy style, he calls romanticism 'spilt religion' (1994: 62).

Romanticism. Movement across the arts, usually defined as stretching from the late eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century, though aestheticism is often understood as a late version of romanticism. Romanticism emphasizes the value of the individual over the collective and therefore privileges individual subjectivity, imagination, emotion and spontaneity over objectivity, reason, the intellect and order. The movement sees the emergence of the cult of the artist and artistic originality, and the aim of art becomes identified with the expression of the artist's emotion, rather than conformation to agreed standards of beauty. In English literature, the romantic movement includes Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797), William Wordsworth (1770–1850), Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834), Lord Byron (1788–1824), Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822) and John Keats (1795–1821).

But what does this mean for poetry? Hulme has much to say about the merits of classical over romantic verse and he also gives a confident list of those writers he assigns to each camp: the classicists are Horace, the Elizabethans and the Augustans (he mentions Alexander Pope in particular), the romantics are Alphonse de Lamartine, Victor Hugo, ‘parts of Keats’, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley and Swinburne. Hulme argues that the style and vocabulary of poetry is determined by romantic or classical allegiance: the romantic writes of the infinite because he thinks of man as unlimited, ‘you might say if you wished that the whole of the romantic attitude seems to crystallize in verse round metaphors of flight’ (1994: 62). This Hulme connects to what he sees as romanticism’s high rhetorical pitch, and he contrasts it with two lines from Shakespeare’s late play *Cymbeline*: ‘Golden lads and girls all must / Like chimney sweepers come to dust’. Shakespeare, according to Hulme, is a classicist and the evidence is his use of ‘lads’; a romantic, Hulme remarks, would have written ‘golden youth’ to elevate the verse (1994: 63). Hulme defines classicist verse, therefore, as more reserved than the romantic, because the classicist never forgets the limits of man. Hence Shakespeare’s ‘golden lads’ may be golden, but they return to the earth, limited by their mortality.

Although the essay is mainly about poetry, Hulme in fact begins with a statement of politics. Revealing an unappealing taste for violence, he tells his audience about a brawl at a Paris theatre the previous year, when some audience members objected to a lecturer’s unfavourable remarks about the seventeenth-century French dramatist, Jean Racine. Hulme, it turns out, approves of the brawlers: ‘these people interrupted because the classical ideal is a living thing to them and Racine is the great classic. That is what I call a real vital interest in literature’ (1994: 60). The brawl he describes had been orchestrated by the Camelots du Roi, a group known for its violent acts on behalf of the Action Française, a nationalist and royalist movement on the extreme right of the French political spectrum, and the impetus for Hulme’s and Eliot’s classicism. Hulme prefaces ‘Romanticism and Classicism’ by confirming that he uses the terms in a precise sense, the sense used by ‘the group of polemical writers who make most use of them at the present day, and have almost succeeded in making them political catchwords. I mean Maurras, Lasserre and all the group connected with *L’Action Française*’ (1994: 60).

THE ACTION FRANÇAISE

The Action Française was formed in 1898 in the wake of the Dreyfus Affair, promoting an anti-democratic, anti-Semitic and nationalist agenda. The writer and critic Charles Maurras (1868–1952) led the movement with a call for a unified French nation, to be brought about by a return to the monarchy and a rejection of the democratic values of the French Revolution. For Maurras, the Revolution was a catastrophic break in the core tradition of Western civilization that had begun in Greece, continued in ancient Rome and spread to Latin Europe through the influence of the Roman Catholic Church. This tradition he called ‘classical’, and he opposed it to the spirit of the Revolution, which he termed ‘romantic’. The Swiss–French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) was for Maurras the embodiment of romanticism, and, like many conservatives, he traced the intellectual source of the Revolution to Rousseau’s writings on man’s natural virtue and equality. More than any other figure, Maurras was responsible for turning the terms ‘classical’ and ‘romantic’ into starkly opposed political positions, where classical stood for order, reason, hierarchy, community and tradition, and romantic for chaos, emotion, equality, individualism and revolution (Asher 1995: 23). The Vichy regime that collaborated with the Nazis during the German occupation of France (1940–1944) declared itself indebted to Maurras’s ideas, and Maurras and his fellow members of the Action Française were enthusiastic supporters of the regime (Weber 1962: 442–56).

The Dreyfus Affair. In 1894 a military court convicted the Jewish Captain Alfred Dreyfus of spying and sentenced him to life imprisonment. The case polarized public opinion: Dreyfus professed his innocence, and those who supported him (the ‘Dreyfusards’) argued that he was the victim of anti-Semitism and anti-liberal forces in the military. The novelist Émile Zola was arrested for publishing an open letter under the heading ‘*J’Accuse*’, which claimed (correctly) that the military authorities had suppressed evidence that could exonerate Dreyfus. The anti-Dreyfusards used the case to shore up nationalist sentiment against those it saw as France’s enemies within: Jews, socialists and liberals. Dreyfus was retried in 1899, and again found guilty but pardoned; in 1904 he was retried by a civilian court of appeal and finally cleared.

References to the Action Française began to appear in Hulme's writings during the spring of 1911 in the three instalments of 'A Note on the Art of Political Conversion'. Hulme holds up the French movement's success in attracting young French intellectuals to the conservative cause as an example to which the British Tory party should aspire: in France 'the really latest and advanced thing is to be a Neo-Royalist', he writes (1994: 210). But while the Action Française's doctrine of classicism helped Hulme to organize ideas that had long been part of his literary criticism, such as his aversion to aestheticism, it was inconsistent with his interest in Bergson. The Action Française condemned Bergson's philosophy as romantic and, on his return from the International Philosophical Congress in Bologna in April 1911, Hulme visited one of the movement's leading members, Pierre Lasserre (1867–1930), to discuss the issue. In Hulme's account (in 'Balfour, Bergson, and Politics'), Lasserre explains to Hulme that Bergson's theory of time is used by the French left wing to argue for progressive politics and democratic rule. To the Action Française's argument that France should return to the monarchical rule of the pre-revolutionary period, the democrats respond that it is useless to apply the political lessons of the past to the present, citing Bergson's conception of the present moment as unique and unrepeatable (1994: 165). Hulme's initial response to Lasserre's denunciation of Bergson was to find a compromise: he suggested that Bergson's analysis of time applied to the individual consciousness, but not to collective human experience. In writings produced during the autumn and winter of 1911–1912, including 'Romanticism and Classicism', Hulme advocated both the classicism of the Action Française and Bergsonism. But over the next few years, Bergson was to lose his pre-eminent place in Hulme's thought, while the classicism of the Action Française endured, renamed in his later work 'the religious attitude' (1994: 426).

Eliot first encountered Maurras, Lasserre and the Action Française in one of his graduate courses at Harvard, 'Literary Criticism in France', taught by Irving Babbitt (1865–1933), Professor of French and Comparative Literature. Although Babbitt did not support every aspect of the Action Française's programme, he agreed with key elements: its stance against romanticism, Rousseau and democracy, and its commitment to tradition, order and cultural elitism. During his stay in Paris the following year, Eliot read Maurras's *L'Avenir de l'intelligence* (*The Future of Intelligence*) (1905). When he delivered a lecture series

Humanism. General term for philosophies or beliefs that prioritize the human. Renaissance humanism developed from the study of Greek and Roman classics and, though consistent with religious belief, signified a shift of focus from God and the supernatural to the human. Since the mid-nineteenth century, humanism has frequently been used to denote anti-religious philosophy.

on ‘Modern French Literature’ in 1916, he followed the theories of Maurras, Lasserre and Babbitt closely, characterizing the twentieth century as a return to the ideals of classicism. Their books were included in the course bibliography (Schuchard 1999: 27, 30–31).

Eliot was also drawing on Hulme’s writings in these lectures. Recently uncovered evidence has proved that, despite Eliot’s statement to the contrary, Eliot and Hulme met during the period between Eliot’s arrival in London in August 1914 and Hulme’s death on 28 September 1917, for much of which Hulme was fighting in France. Although he does not appear to have known Hulme well, Eliot admired his writings, and the information for the second lecture in the ‘Modern French Literature’ series not only gives the Action Française and Babbitt definition of classicism, but adds Hulme’s particular contribution, that classicism may be defined as a belief in original sin (Schuchard 2003: 66; Asher 1995: 37–39). In 1929, in the second of two essays on Babbitt and humanism (‘The Humanism of Irving Babbitt (1928)’, ‘Second Thoughts about Humanism (1929)’), Eliot compared Hulme’s religious classicism favourably to Babbitt’s humanist classicism, in which he detected a taint of romanticism. Eliot’s classicism is thus indebted primarily to these three sources, and it became the basis for both his literary philosophy and his right-wing conservative politics.

ELIOT’S CLASSICIST CRITICISM

Eliot’s classicism is more pronounced in his literary criticism than it is in his poetry. In fact, in ‘The Function of Criticism’ (1923), Eliot states that criticism is *necessarily* classicist. Criticism presupposes the existence of agreed principles and standards, he argues, whereas the romantic faith in individual judgement and expression is opposed to the very idea of such principles (1980: 31). *The Criterion*, the influential

journal Eliot edited from 1922 to 1939, was intended to be a critical organ that expressed ‘the modern tendency’ of classicism. At the end of a 1926 editorial, ‘The Idea of a Literary Review’, Eliot provided a short reading list of books that illustrated this tendency: it included works by Maurras and Babbitt alongside Hulme’s posthumous *Speculations* (1924), a collection of his essays edited by *Criterion* contributor Herbert Read (1926: 5).

But Eliot’s literary criticism is not only classicist in attitude; the arguments themselves advance classicist values. One of the most important of these is his argument that ‘in the seventeenth century a dissociation of sensibility set in’ (1980: 288). This famous phrase makes its first appearance in ‘The Metaphysical Poets’ (1921), a review of an anthology of seventeenth-century verse, which was returning to critical favour at this time. Eliot had begun to develop the idea in 1917 (in ‘Reflections on Contemporary Poetry’), but the argument was worked out more fully in ‘The Metaphysical Poets’ and two other articles from 1921, ‘Andrew Marvell’ and ‘John Dryden’ (published together as *Homage to John Dryden* in 1924), and subsequently in the Clark Lectures, delivered at Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1926 and in the Turnbull Lectures, delivered at Johns Hopkins in 1933.

Eliot’s claim in ‘The Metaphysical Poets’ is that the dramatists of the sixteenth century (such as George Chapman, Thomas Middleton, John Webster and Cyril Tourneur) and their successors, the poets of the seventeenth century (such as John Donne, George Herbert and Henry King) had a sensibility that could ‘devour any kind of experience’ and transform it into art. But some time in the seventeenth century, Eliot argues, a dissociation of feeling and thought takes place ‘from which we have never recovered’. Thus, by the nineteenth century, poets like Tennyson and Browning ‘do not feel their thought as immediately as the odour of a rose’, whereas ‘a thought to Donne was an experience; it modified his sensibility’ (1980: 287–88). Eliot does, however, think that a unification of sensibility was achieved in the poetry of certain nineteenth-century French poets, the symbolists Tristan Corbière (1845–1875), Laforgue and Baudelaire: he compares the latter to Racine, whom, as we know from Hulme’s ‘Romanticism and Classicism’, is for the Action Française the embodiment of literary classicism (1980: 290).

‘The Metaphysical Poets’ at first appears to be making a solely literary argument. But on closer inspection, the essay hints at a non-literary

reason for the change in style it describes. First, Eliot locates the dissociation of sensibility at the historical moment of the English Civil War and the fall of the monarchy: he specifically notes that he is interested in ‘the poets of the seventeenth century (up to the Revolution)’ (1980: 285). Second, Eliot argues that the anti-royalist Milton ‘aggravated’ the dissociation. Finally, Eliot chooses quotations from Chapman and Baudelaire that portray humankind as a small part of a greater universal scheme, that is, they embody a classicist world view, while a quotation from Browning locates human value in the individual self. Thus, Maurras’s account of classicism is transferred from French to English literary history, with the Civil War replacing the French Revolution as the hinge-point between classicism and romanticism, and Milton replacing the arch-romantic Rousseau (Asher 1995: 46–48; Menand 1987: 148–50).

INDIVIDUALIST ANARCHISM: POUND AND THE EGOIST

Pound’s pre-war politics were less well defined than either Hulme’s or Eliot’s. Nevertheless, in 1913 he began to contribute to a magazine that had a very definite place on the political spectrum: the individualist anarchist *New Freewoman*. Initially publishing under the title of *The Freewoman*, *The New Freewoman* (as it became in 1913) was founded as a feminist periodical that campaigned for the psychological, social, economic and political freedom of women. Its editor, Dora Marsden (1882–1960), was a former suffragist who had come to believe that the focus on gaining the vote had blinded women to their lack of freedom in other, more important, areas of their lives. She argued that, rather than achieving the vote as a means to obtain other freedoms, women should focus on gaining their psychological freedom first. Her conception of psychological freedom was indebted to Bergson’s work, but also to that of the philosophers Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) and, especially, Max Stirner (1806–1956), both of whom had had major works recently translated into English. Despite the fact that, as Lasserre told Hulme, French democrats used Bergson’s writings to justify their politics, Bergson was claimed by others as a champion of anti-democracy, of individualism (Schwartz 1992: 278–79): it was this interpretation of his work that enabled Marsden to group him with Nietzsche and Stirner. Her interpretation of their writings was articulated in the journal

Anarchism. Anarchists believe that government by the state is an imposition on human freedom and advocate the abolition of all structures of authority. Different strains of anarchism propose distinct forms of social organization in their place: collectivism, mutualism and syndicalism, for example, all advocate different types of economic reform designed to ensure that workers are the main beneficiaries of their own labour. Individualist anarchism, by contrast, is compatible with private property ownership and emphasizes the removal of all constraints to the pursuit of individual self-interest. Major theorists of anarchism include the collectivist anarchist Mikhail Bakunin (1814–1876), the mutualist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–1865), the syndicalist Georges Sorel (1847–1822), and the individualist Max Stirner.

as an individualist anarchism (or ‘egoism’ as it was called at the time), in which the individual is opposed to the collective, and individual experience, rather than abstract reason, is the ground for all knowledge and action.

As Marsden became more interested in individualist anarchism, the journal’s focus moved away from feminism towards broader philosophical and intellectual concerns, as reflected in its change of name to the non-gendered *Egoist* in 1914. By the time Pound was invited to contribute in 1913, the journal had begun to develop an individualist theory of art based on ‘experienced emotion’ rather than abstract ideas (Marsden 1913: 82), a theory that brought it very close to the Bergsonian philosophy Hulme had fed into imagism. Consequently, when Pound’s imagist poetry appeared in *The New Freewoman*, it appeared remarkably consistent with the journal’s philosophical and political content, especially as it was introduced by a preface that described the imagists as ‘a little band who desire the poet to be as disciplined and efficient at his job as the stevedore’, reclaiming poetry from ‘learned persons, given to soft living among veiled things and unaccustomed to being sacked for talking too much’ (West 1913: 86). Marsden encouraged Pound to develop the connection between his poetry and the journal’s politics: when she asked him to explain his philosophy, he replied, ‘I suppose I’m individualist, I suppose I believe in the arts as the most effective propaganda for a sort of individual liberty that can be developed without public inconvenience’, a point he explored in his essay ‘The

'Serious Artist', run on the journal's front page (Clarke 1996: 107). There, Pound argued that the value of the arts lies in their ability to provide psychological data, data that registers the individuality of human experience: 'men differ among themselves as leaves upon trees differ. [. . .] they do not resemble each other as do buttons cut by machine'. Even though he does so somewhat tentatively, he clearly connects this argument to the journal's political stance. Since the arts teach us that 'all men do not desire the same things', Pound argues that 'it would therefore be inequitable to give to all men two acres and a cow [. . .] No perfect state will be founded on the theory, or on the working hypothesis that all men are alike' (1960: 42, 47).

These statements imply a disagreement with a fundamental tenet of democracy, namely equality; and four months later the journal printed a much more intemperate article by Pound in which he declared that the artist 'has been at peace with his oppressors for long enough. He has dabbled in democracy and he is now done with that folly'. He proposed instead an 'aristocracy of the arts', arguing that the artist 'knows he is born to rule but he has no intention of trying to rule by general franchise. He at least is born to the purple. He is not elected by a system of plural voting' (1914a: 68). But what could Pound mean in practice by an 'aristocracy of the arts'? Unlike Hulme, Pound did not translate his anti-democracy into a party allegiance: later the same year he commented that 'as a syndicalist, somewhat atrabilious, I disbelieve vigorously in any recognition of political institutions' (1914b: 254). This aversion to political institutions, and to the state more generally, is at the root of his attraction to anarchism and, later, to Italian fascism. Throughout his life Pound proclaimed his commitment to 'civilization', which he believed would best be preserved in a hierarchical society with power given to artists.

A POETRY OF RESTRAINT

Around 1917 Eliot and Pound decided that 'the dilution of *vers libre*, Amygism, Lee Mastersism, general floppiness had gone too far and that some counter-current must be set going' (Pound 1932: 590). Their reaction against free verse was motivated by a number of factors, the most immediate of which was that Pound disapproved of the direction the imagist anthologies had taken under the editorship of Amy Lowell. But this biographical factor is connected to a more

important issue: imagism's very popularity suggested to Eliot and Pound that free verse had for the time being played out its useful role in changing Anglo-American poetry: the opportunities it afforded were great, but its drawbacks were starting to become apparent. Chief among these, according to Eliot and Pound, was its potential lack of rigour. In the short pamphlet *Ezra Pound: His Metric and Poetry* (1917), Eliot reviewed Pound's career to date, emphasizing the metrical virtuosity of even his free verse poems:

the freedom of Pound's verse is rather a state of tension due to constant opposition between free and strict. There are not, as a matter of fact, two kinds of verse, the strict and the free; there is only a mastery which comes of being so well trained that form is an instinct and can be adapted to the particular purpose in hand.

(1978: 172)

The reaction against free verse is also the logical result of the political and ethical associations Eliot and Pound were now attaching to their poetry. In Eliot's case, in particular, one can see how inconsistent a poetry of 'general floppiness' would be with the classicist position he was advancing in his criticism. Eliot, Babbitt, Hulme and Maurras all drew direct connections between poetic form and political belief, and the freedom of free verse was all too easily connected with the democratic and revolutionary impulses of romanticism. Pound's less defined politics did not entail such a connection, and indeed his individualist anarchism was historically associated with free verse via the symbolists. However, like Eliot, Pound had always insisted that free verse could be technically proficient. In 'The Serious Artist' his argument that art's value is in its supply of psychological data led him to define good art as 'art that bears true witness, I mean the art that is most precise', because 'if an artist falsifies his report as to the nature of man [. . .], then that artist lies', and lies as seriously, Pound argued, as the doctor who gives misleading information to advance his or her career. 'Good writing is writing that is perfectly controlled, the writer says just what he means' (1960: 43–44, 50). Even though Eliot and Pound represent quite different strains of anti-democracy, therefore, they both relate their beliefs in the political sphere to stylistic precision and restraint in their poetry.

To counter the fashion for free verse, Eliot and Pound prescribed themselves a reading course ‘remedy’ of *Émaux et Camées* (*Enamels and Cameos*) (1852), a collection of poetry by the French pre-symbolist Théophile Gautier (1811–1872), and the Bay Psalm Book (1640) used by the early Puritan settlers in New England. The lesson of both was ‘rhyme and regular strophes’, and the results were Eliot’s quatrain poems in *Ara vos Prec* (1920; published in the United States as *Poems*), and Pound’s poem sequence, ‘Hugh Selwyn Mauberley’ (1920) (Pound 1932: 590).

ELIOT’S *ARA VOS PREC*

The poem in *Ara vos Prec* which most directly relates to Eliot’s writings on classicism is ‘Whispers of Immortality’ (1918): it anticipates the argument of ‘The Metaphysical Poets’ published a year later. In the first half of the poem Eliot describes the sensibility of John Webster and John Donne, whom he thought achieved a union of thought and feeling in their writings. Of Webster, best known for his macabre tragedies, *The Duchess of Malfi* and *The White Devil*, Eliot writes that he ‘knew that thought clings round dead limbs / Tightening its lusts and luxuries’, and Donne ‘was such another / Who found no substitute for sense, / To seize and clutch and penetrate’. The second half of the poem provides a contrast with the first, suggesting that in modern life sensuality (represented by the curvaceous Russian Grishkin, unconstrained by corset) is proximate to, but has no contact with, the shaping power of the intellect (‘Abstract Entities / Circumambulate her charm’) (1969a: 52–53). Eliot adds a further classicist twist in the title, which alludes to Wordsworth’s famous ‘Ode: Intimations of Immortality’. Wordsworth’s poem, a classic of romantic literature, addresses a six-year-old child as ‘Mighty prophet! Seer blest! / On whom those truths do rest, / Which we are toiling all our lives to find’ (1977: 527), because he does not have knowledge, specifically knowledge of death. Wordsworth, the romantic, celebrates and envies the child’s innocence; Eliot, the classicist, admires Webster’s and Donne’s knowledge.

Just as important as the content, however, is the form; indeed, Eliot later said of these poems that ‘the form gave the impetus to the content’ (Hall 1959: 55). The use of quatrains (stanzas of four lines each) and the (mostly) eight-syllable lines follow the structure of

Gautier's verse in *Émaux et Camées*. But what does this strict style do to the verse? If we compare the first few lines of 'Prufrock' with this poem, we immediately become aware of the impact of the regular metre and rhyme scheme. Despite the predominantly conversational vocabulary, the regular metre forces the voice out of its normal speech patterns so that it emphasizes certain syllables more heavily than it would in conversation: 'Wébster was much posséssed by déath / And saw the skúll benéath the skín' (1969a: 52). The effect on the poem's tone is striking: the intimacy of 'Prufrock' is replaced by formality. 'Whispers of Immortality' expresses not the exploratory private thoughts of a particular mind, but the succinct public declarations of an aloof, invisible speaker.

This volume, like its predecessor, is an exercise in satire, but the change from free verse to regular quatrains sharpens the attack by facilitating hard contrasts and making the reader aware of an authorial presence outside the poem. So in 'Whispers of Immortality', the thematic contrast between Webster and Donne, on the one hand, and Grishkin on the other, is emphasized by the formal break between the two halves of the poem; in 'The Hippopotamus', stanzas two to six are split in half by rhyme and punctuation, with the first and second lines referring to the hippopotamus and the third and fourth to the 'True Church' with which it is contrasted; and in 'A Cooking Egg' the first and last two stanzas represent the everyday companionship of Pipit, contrasted in the central four stanzas with the ideal companionship of a series of figures from history (1969a: 44–45, 49–50, 52–53). Again and again, the target of the satire is revealed as the division between the world of the intellect and the world of the senses, the latter represented in three poems by 'apeneck Sweeney', the selfish, lascivious natural man who is Eliot's satire on the romantic faith in man's natural virtue.

POUND'S 'HUGH SELWYN MAUBERLEY'

Once admired for their sense of order and intellectual toughness, Eliot's quatrain poems are less appealing to critical taste today: 'the aridity and frigidity that he praised he found', remarks one critic succinctly (Levenson 1984: 161). Conversely, the product of Pound's study of the quatrain form is one of his major works. 'Hugh Selwyn Mauberley' tells the story of two failed poets, 'E.P.', who apart from being dead

bears a striking similarity to Pound himself, and the Hugh Selwyn Mauberley of the title. Pound portrays both poets as out of touch with modern life, and the major question posed by the poem is: how should one write in the twentieth century? This question is not resolved. In the first poem of the sequence, we encounter E.P. trying ‘to resuscitate the dead art / Of poetry; to maintain “the sublime” / In the old sense’, but his audience is uninterested and he fails to respond to ‘the march of events’. He dies a failed poet, ‘No adjunct to the Muses’ diadem’ (1990: 187). The rest of the first section of the poem elaborates on the reasons for E.P.’s irrelevance by reviewing recent literary history: Pound tracks the rise of mass culture and the fate of the artists who will not or cannot respond to the new conditions and new audiences it has created. In the second section, Mauberley makes his entrance. He is a Prufrockian aesthete as out of place as E.P. His technical precision, ‘his sense of graduations’, is ‘Quite out of place amid / Resistance to current exacerbations’ (1990: 201).

The poem is filled with references to Gautier’s *Émaux et Camées*. Like Eliot, Pound finds Gautier’s quatrain form a useful method of creating sharp contrasts, such as those of the third poem where the beauty of the past is compared to the degradation of the present. But his most important allusion is to Gautier’s comparison of the poet with the sculptor, which is used as a major conceit in ‘Hugh Selwyn Mauberley’. In his poem ‘L’Art’ (‘Art’), Gautier tells the poet, sculptor and painter alike to ‘Sculpte, lime, cisèle; / Que ton rêve flottant / Se scelle / Dans le bloc résistant!’ (‘Carve, file, chisel, / So that your floating dream / Is sealed / In the resistant block!’) (Gautier 1981: 150). Language, here, is figured as a hard substance, ‘resistant’ to the touch. Shaping it will require labour and technical skill, but the reward is that one’s most fleeting idea, one’s ‘floating dream’, will be made permanent. The second poem of ‘Hugh Selwyn Mauberley’ uses this metaphor to illustrate how far E.P. is out of step with the modern age:

The 'age demanded' chiefly a mould in plaster,
Made with no loss of time,
A prose kinema, not, not assuredly, alabaster
Or the 'sculpture' of rhyme.

(1990: 188)

The modern age prefers the mass-produced art of the cinema, compared with a plaster mould, to the labour-intensive poetry, compared with alabaster sculpture. The carving metaphor is carried over to the second section of the poem, too: Mauberley's 'tool [was] / The engraver's', and both 'L'Envoi' and 'Medallion', usually understood as examples of E.P.'s and Mauberley's poetry respectively, identify the beauty they aspire to with hardness and permanence: 'roses [...] in magic amber laid', and 'a basket-work of braids which seem as if they were / Spun in King Minos' hall / From metal, or intractable amber' (1990: 197, 204).

In the use of Gautier's metaphor we can discern aspects of Pound's individualism: not only is the plaster mould quick to produce and sell, it is a copy of something else, rather than the original product of an individual artist. It can therefore present no new data about human nature, to use the language of 'The Serious Artist'. Pound associates hardness with precision: 'Gautier is intent on being "hard"; is intent on conveying a certain verity of feeling', he writes in 'The Hard and Soft in French Poetry' (1918) (1960: 285). The modern age's lack of interest in 'hard' poetry, then, is suggestive of a general degeneration – another product of which is, the third poem suggests, the rise of democracy (1990: 189).

SUMMARY

Eliot, Hulme and Pound all held anti-democratic political views during their early careers. Eliot and Hulme identified themselves with 'classicism', in the sense determined by Charles Maurras and the Action Française. Pound, more equivocally, associated himself with the individualist anarchism advanced by Dora Marsden in *The New Freewoman/The Egoist*. The poetics of all three are shaped by these views: Eliot's theory of the 'dissociation of sensibility' that took place at the time of the English Civil War is partially indebted to Maurras's arguments on the connection between romanticism and the French Revolution. Pound connects individualism to poetic precision and integrity. A poetic equivalent of their politics can be found in the regular metre and cult of hardness of the quatrain poems of Eliot's *Ara vos Prec* and Pound's 'Hugh Selwyn Mauberley'.

HISTORY AND TRADITION

One of the defining features of literary modernism is the tension it preserves between tradition and originality. Although modernism is defined by its experimentation, its insistent difference from that which has gone before, modernists are also devoted genealogists, energetically tracing their ancestry back through literary traditions. If we return for a moment to Pound's slogan, 'make it new', we can see that it contains an explanation of this apparent contradiction. To *make* something new suggests that the something is not wholly new: it acknowledges a former existence. Pound's slogan registers a desire to bring things from the past into the present, to make the historical contemporary. This chapter outlines how Eliot, Hulme and Pound theorized literary tradition and history, then explores specific sources for their theories. The final section discusses one particular way that the past was made new by modernist poets: through translation. This chapter opens up many of the questions that will be worked through in more detail in relation to *The Waste Land* and *The Cantos* in the next chapter, so it may help to read the chapters as a pair.

THE USE OF ALLUSION

'Hugh Selwyn Mauberley' presents a challenge to the reader that is not presented by Pound's imagist poems. In addition to questions of

Allusion. Deliberate reference to, or quotation from, sources outside the text. The sources may be literary or non-literary, and they may or may not be textual. The source is not usually identified explicitly, but is intended to enrich the text by inviting the reader to make a comparison between the subject of the text and the source.

general interpretation, every page presents local difficulties: English words outside our vocabulary, words in other languages, quotations for which no source is given, unknown names. If this is less true of Eliot's quatrain poems, the title of the volume itself (*Ara vos Prec*) presents the same kind of difficulty, and *The Waste Land*, published two years later, presents at least as intimidating a surface as 'Mauberley'. Pound's *Cantos* multiply these difficulties further.

Why is Eliot's and Pound's mature poetry so difficult in this way? It is worth emphasizing that it is difficult for everyone: there is no ideal reader who encounters these poems for the first time with total comprehension, no one whose education has been so complete that they can recognize every source. Perhaps we ask the wrong question when we ask why the poetry is difficult. It might be more productive to first ask why we imagine we *should* be able to understand poetry immediately. After all, there are many types of writing we do not expect to understand at first glance: advanced mathematical treatises, for example, or eighteenth-century philosophy. Why should poetry be different? The good poet is a specialist, someone who has trained in an art, and, like the mathematician and the philosopher, works within a discipline developed by others over many years. Just as the mathematician and the philosopher make advances in their field by building on their predecessors' research, so the poet's choice of each phrase is informed by their knowledge of how previous poets have dealt with such a topic, used such a word, worked in such a form. Eliot's and Pound's allusions have the effect of highlighting the fact that their work does not stand alone, but rather exists within a literary network.

ELIOT: TRADITION AND THE 'HISTORICAL SENSE'

Not every poet would describe their work in this way, but Eliot and Pound did: their work is characterized by a remarkably close and self-

conscious engagement with writing by others. In ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’, Eliot explains why. He argues that the poet should have a ‘historical sense’, writing not only ‘with his own generation in his bones’, but ‘with a feeling that the whole of literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order’. It is only with this knowledge that the poet will be capable of writing something genuinely new and worthwhile: ‘we shall often find that not only the best, but the most individual parts of his work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously’ (1980: 14). In Eliot’s view the most individual poet is likely to be the one who is most ‘traditional’, in the particular sense explained here.

Eliot’s definition of literary tradition is part of what he called his ‘Impersonal theory of poetry’, his (remarkably successful) attempt to shift critical attention away from the poet to the poem and its literary context. The other component of this argument in ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’ is an account of the process of poetic creation. Characteristically, Eliot uses a complex analogy, that of a chemical reaction brought about by a catalyst. He explains that when oxygen and sulphur dioxide are mixed in the presence of the catalyst metal, platinum, they create sulphurous acid. The platinum is necessary to generate the reaction that creates the acid, yet the platinum itself is not affected by the reaction and no part of the platinum is present in the acid. It remains, Eliot writes, ‘inert, neutral, unchanged’. The platinum represents the poet’s mind: ‘the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates; the more perfectly will the mind digest and transmute the passions which are its material’ (1980: 18). A more anti-romantic account of poetic creation cannot be imagined, and indeed Eliot quotes and rejects Wordsworth’s famous definition of poetry as ‘emotion recollected in tranquillity’. For Eliot, ‘Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality’ (1980: 18, 21).

POUND: ‘THE METHOD OF LUMINOUS DETAIL’

Pound was Eliot’s prime example of a contemporary poet with the ‘historical sense’: in his introduction to Pound’s 1928 *Selected Poems* he remarked that ‘Pound is often most “original” in the right sense, when

he is most “archaeological” in the ordinary sense’ (Eliot 1948a: 11). If we are to look for an equivalent of ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’ in Pound’s *oeuvre*, we might turn to his series of essays ‘I Gather the Limbs of Osiris’ (1911–1912), which, like ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’ argues that knowledge of literary tradition is vital to the poet. Pound’s emphasis is somewhat different from Eliot’s, however; the early instalments focus less on the writing of poetry than they do on the writing of history or literary history. In a sense, Pound starts his argument a stage earlier than Eliot: if poets are to be well-informed about literary tradition, good literary histories are needed to educate them. At present, he complains, histories either overwhelm one with ‘multitudinous detail’ or they are all ‘sentiment and generalisation’. He proposes instead a ‘method of Luminous Detail’, by which the scholar presents a ‘few dozen’ carefully chosen facts that will sum up the period under discussion (1973: 21, 22, 24). Imagism had not been launched when Pound published this series, but we might see Pound’s ‘method of Luminous Detail’ as a proto-imagist approach to literary history.

Most of ‘I Gather the Limbs of Osiris’ consists of Pound’s application of his methodology to literary history: in the study of literature and art, he writes, the luminous details are ‘particular works or the works of particular authors’. This at first seems compatible with Eliot’s conception of a literary history as a ‘simultaneous order’ of literary works. But as Pound continues, the difference between the two poets as historians becomes clear. If the emphasis on literary tradition is a means for Eliot to shift attention away from the individual poet, it is for Pound just the opposite: a way of highlighting the significance of certain careers. Prefiguring the individualism of ‘The Serious Artist’, Pound argues that:

in each soul there is some one element which predominates, which is in some peculiar and intense way the quality or *virtù* of the individual; in no two souls is this the same [...] it is by reason of this *virtù* that we have one Catullus, one Villon.

(1973: 24)

He then lists the four writers whose *virtù* has been most powerful, Homer, Dante, Chaucer and Shakespeare, and claims that they ‘represent four distinct phases of consciousness’. He suggests, in other words, that

history (up to the Renaissance, at least), can be divided into four phases that can be mapped on to the careers of four men (1973: 28–29).

HULME: FROM FLUX TO STASIS

As we might expect, Hulme's conception of literary tradition and history changed fundamentally when he exchanged his Bergsonism for classicism in 1911–1912. In his Bergsonian phase his views bear some similarity to Pound's; as a classicist he moves closer to Eliot's position. In the Bergson-influenced 'A Lecture on Modern Poetry' (1908), for example, he shares Pound's view that literary history is consciously made by the actions of individuals: 'changes do not come by a kind of natural progress of which the artist himself is unconscious', he writes, 'the new forms are deliberately introduced by people who detest the old ones'. But, unlike Pound, Hulme puts forward the orthodox Bergsonian view that everything is impermanent, in flux, and therefore he sees literary tradition as irrelevant to the modern poet; 'I am of course in favour of the complete destruction of all verse more than twenty years old' (1994: 50–51).

However, in 'Romanticism and Classicism' (c. 1911–1912), Hulme takes quite the opposite position on tradition: his classicism leads him to argue that 'man is an extraordinary fixed and limited animal whose nature is absolutely constant. It is only by tradition and organization that anything decent can be got out of him'. As a result Hulme now plays down the importance of both originality ('there is nothing particularly desirable about freshness *per se*. Works of art aren't eggs') and emotion: 'there is a general tendency to think that verse means little else than the expression of unsatisfied emotion' (1994: 61, 66, 70). Although there is a correspondence with Eliot's argument in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' here, Hulme has much less to say about literary tradition than either Eliot or Pound. 'Romanticism and Classicism' was his last important essay on literature: from this point his attention turned to the visual arts and politics.

SPATIAL FORMS

The issue of literary tradition is connected to the more general topic of the treatment of history in modernist poetry. In the next chapter we will look at the historical content of *The Waste Land* and *The Cantos*,

but here I want to address the formal method by which the historical material will be organized. We might reasonably expect that Eliot's, Hulme's and Pound's emphasis on literary tradition would be compatible with a conception of history as a linear progression, an evolution. In his early writings Pound occasionally hints towards this idea (1973: 25), but broadly speaking what is most striking about the three poets' representation of history is its non-linear character. Eliot's 'simultaneous order' and Pound's 'method of Luminous Details' represent history as arranged in space, rather than developing through time.

'We do NOT know the past in chronological sequence', wrote Pound in 1938. 'It may be convenient to lay it out anesthetized on the table with dates pasted on here and there, but what we know we know by ripples and spirals eddying out from us and from our time (1970b: 60). In this statement (note the allusion to Eliot's 'Prufrock') Pound sums up his, Eliot's and Hulme's reaction against the dominant way history had been characterized in the nineteenth century: as progress. Not only does Pound substitute linear history with a circular or cyclical history here, he also emphasizes that we cannot objectively know it. History is our present-day interpretation of the past. The literary critic James Longenbach has argued that their emphasis on history as an experience, rather than an entity in itself, marks Eliot and Pound out as part of the early twentieth-century move towards 'existential historicism' (1987: 13).

'Provincia Deserta' (1915) and 'Near Perigord' (1916) are early examples of Pound's existential historicism. In these poems Pound juxtaposes incidents from Provençal history with comments about his own experience of interpreting them: 'Take the whole man, and ravel out the story. / He loved this lady in castle Montagnac?' (1990: 152). Eliot takes a more indirect approach in 'Gerontion' (1919) by criticizing his protagonist's non-existential perception of history: Gerontion is

Existential historicism. Fredric Jameson coined the term in his essay 'Marxism and Historicism': 'existential historicism does not involve the construction of this or that linear or evolutionary or genetic history, but rather designates something like a transhistorical event [...]. For existential historicism [...] the experience of history is a contact between an individual subject in the present and a cultural object in the past' (1979: 50, 53).

Juxtaposition. The *Oxford English Dictionary* definition is 'the action of placing two or more things close together or side by side, or one thing beside another; the condition of being so placed'.

unable to experience history as a 'simultaneous order'; for him it is disordered, threatening: 'History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors / And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions, / Guides us by vanities' (1969a: 38). In all three poems, moments from diverse periods of history are placed side by side, as if experienced simultaneously, rather than one after the other. This spatial approach to history had a direct impact on Eliot's and Pound's major works, *The Waste Land* and *The Cantos*, which reject linear and chronological narratives in favour of organizing their material by juxtaposition. I now want to look quite briefly at three contemporaneous influences on Eliot's, Hulme's and Pound's method of organizing history: anthropological studies of myth and ritual, early twentieth-century visual art, and the theory of Chinese language put forward by the American philosopher Ernest Fenollosa.

MYTH AND RITUAL

The discipline of anthropology attracted widespread interest among early twentieth-century writers who believed that 'as it is certain that some study of primitive man furthers our understanding of civilized man, so it is certain that primitive art and poetry help our understanding of civilized art and poetry' (Eliot 1919: 1036). Both Eliot and Pound were interested in the studies of mythology associated with the Scottish anthropologist James Frazer (1854–1941) and the group of English classicists known as the Cambridge Ritualists, which argued that the continuities between different myths and religions (including Christianity) could be explained by tracing them to a common origin in a particular magical or religious ritual. Although their approaches differed (Eliot's, at least initially, was the approach of the scholar, Pound's that of the practitioner or believer), their recognition of the opportunity myth presented to contemporary literature was similar.

In the third year of his doctoral study Eliot took a course on 'A Comparative Study of Various Types of Scientific Method' with the philosopher Josiah Royce (1855–1916). One of the papers he wrote

for this class concerned 'The Interpretation of Primitive Ritual' (C. Eliot 1926: viii). Drawing on his reading of Bradley and demonstrating his existential historicist perspective, Eliot criticized anthropological attempts to establish a science of religious ritual. The study of religion, Eliot argued, can yield no objective facts from which to draw meaning or situate a point of origin, because religion is a set of practices that exist within particular historical contexts, and their meaning for their practitioners changes over the course of time (Gray 1982: 109–114). One cannot stand outside history.

However, Eliot's paper concludes that from the study of religious rituals and myths we can know 'what men did at one period and another, and can to some extent see the development of one form out of another', which may produce 'enough cross-sections to interpret a process, if not a purpose'. In this context, Eliot praised Frazer's thirteen-volume compendium of myth and ritual, *The Golden Bough* (1890–1915, 1936), and ten years later he referred to it as 'a work of no less importance for our time than the complementary work of Freud', and perhaps of 'greater permanence' than Freud's 'because it is a statement of fact which is not involved in the maintenance or fall of any theory of the author's' (Gray 1982: 128–131). What Eliot admired in Frazer's approach was that he juxtaposed descriptions of diverse myths and rituals without subordinating them to his own interpretation. Eliot would use both Frazer's research and his method in *The Waste Land*.

Pound had also read Frazer, but, characteristically, he was more interested in a marginal figure: the (briefly imagist) poet and popular novelist Allen Upward (1863–1926). In 1913 Pound reviewed Upward's idiosyncratic history of Christianity, *The Divine Mystery*, as 'the most fascinating book on folk-lore that I have ever opened' (1973: 403). Though he criticized aspects of Frazer's argument, Upward's approach through myth and ritual was indebted to *The Golden Bough*, and his method was markedly similar: 'it is not a mass of theories', remarked Pound, 'it is this history told in a series of vivid and precise illustrations'. Like Frazer, Upward stressed continuities between periods and cultures, presenting history as a 'stratification', 'a vertical section, for all these stages of emotion and belief are present at the same time in the collective and individual conscience of mankind' (1913: 165; Longenbach 1987: 117). Pound, who had a lifelong interest in the occult, appears to have believed in this form of historical simultaneity rather more literally than Eliot, for in 'Psychology and the Troubadours' (1912) Pound

described the enduring relevance of Greek mythology as follows: 'I believe in a sort of permanent basis in humanity [. . .]. I know, I mean, one man who understands Persephone and Demeter, and one who understands the Laurel, and another who has, I should say, met Artemis' (1968: 92). Nevertheless, Upward's influence on Pound's poetry is comparable to Frazer's effect on Eliot's. Pound admires the juxtaposition of diverse historical moments that reveal continuities and patterns without overt intervention by the author.

MODERNIST VISUAL ART

Artists as well as writers engaged in the early twentieth-century interest in primitivism. In France two of the most innovative artists of the period, Pablo Picasso (1881–1973) and Henri Matisse (1869–1954), dramatically transformed their art in 1906 after being shown an African mask; in London the sculptor Jacob Epstein (1880–1959) was inspired by the African, Assyrian, and Oceanic sculpture he was able to see in Paris and London ethnographic museums (Antliff and Leighten 2001: 32; Silber 1986: 22–26). Having ceased to write about literature, in 1913 and 1914 Hulme devoted himself to championing this new style in art, praising in particular Epstein's sculpture and the paintings and sculptures produced by the group of artists known as the 'vorticists'.

Hulme summarized the major points of his art criticism in a 1914 lecture since published as 'Modern Art and Its Philosophy'. It argues that the new style of art practised by Epstein, Picasso ('cubism') and Wyndham Lewis (1882–1957) ('vorticism') indicates the emergence of a general change in outlook, or attitude towards the world (1994: 269). In many ways the change corresponds to the romanticism/classicism shift he forecast earlier in relation to poetry, but Hulme now moves the argument away from its original Action Française context and renames his terms. Romanticism, which Maurras had traced to the French Revolution of 1789, is now renamed 'the humanist attitude' and traced to an earlier point (earlier even than Eliot's English Civil War): the Renaissance. Classicism is renamed 'the religious attitude', and this allows Hulme to include in it the primitive pre-classical and Eastern cultures that lay outside the Action Française's framework. Hulme represents the emergence of the religious attitude, as he had the emergence of classicism, as a *re*-emergence, a return to the attitude of an earlier age. He argues that Epstein is interested in Assyrian

sculpture not because it is exotic or fashionable, but because he has an emotional affinity with the Assyrian sculptor: primitive works of art ‘are liked directly, almost as they were liked by the people who made them, as being direct expressions of an attitude which you want to find expressed’ (1994: 277).

The major source behind Hulme’s argument was a book by a German art historian, Wilhelm Worringer (1881–1965), entitled *Abstraktion und Einfühlung (Abstraction and Empathy)* (1908). Worringer argued that the history of art should not be read as a history of ability, progressing towards a Western-defined conception of naturalism or realism, with non-Western art dismissed as primitive or technically inferior versions. Instead, the history of art should be understood as consisting of two opposed artistic intentions: one produces the art of naturalism, familiar in the West, but there is also, Worringer argues, an artistic intention that produces abstract art. Naturalist art is an expression of empathy, produced by artists expressing their delight in the world. Abstract art expresses anxiety about the artist’s place in the world – the defining feature of the abstract artists, Worringer suggests, is their instinctive agoraphobia, their ‘spiritual dread of space’. The empathetic artist aims to represent the vital and organic nature of the world, and therefore produces naturalist work. The space-shy artist, however, aims to make sense of the world by drawing out individual forms from their surrounding context and giving them a fixity, a permanence. Lines tend to be less curved, more angular, and the three dimensions we perceive in nature are flattened into two (1997: 15–22).

Hulme provides a long and fairly faithful account of Worringer’s argument in ‘Modern Art and Its Philosophy’, but we should note that he introduces certain emphases. First, while Worringer argues

Cubism. Considered by many to be the most important art movement of the twentieth century. Cubism existed from about 1907–1920 and is associated with the work of the Paris-based artists Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque (1882–1963) and Juan Gris (1887–1927), among others. The cubist style is characterized by fragmentation of the image (often into different perspectives perceived simultaneously) and a move towards abstraction. Cubism was one of the major influences on Wyndham Lewis’s London-based vorticist group.

that abstraction is as important a tendency in art as naturalism, he explicitly states that he does not intend to elevate one above the other (1997: 30–31); Hulme, by contrast, represents abstract art as more complex and a greater artistic achievement, and welcomes the return of the religious attitude which produces it (1994: 284–85, 293). Second, while Worringer raises the idea that the modern artist has an affinity with the primitive artist, he rejects the conclusion that this will bring about a general return to abstraction (1997: 18); Hulme states that affinity more firmly, and explicitly explains the new art as its expression. Finally, Worringer is somewhat obscure in his situating of the abstraction/empathy hypothesis in history. It is not clear whether the tendencies correspond to distinct historical periods, or different stages in a people's culture, or are simultaneously available throughout all periods of history and stages of culture. Hulme, as we have seen, relates them to specific time periods: the pre- and post-Renaissance (Beasley 2006: 66).

Although Hulme did not himself explore how a distinction between humanism and the religious attitude might be applied to literature, it proved useful to Pound in his theorizing of modernist poetry, especially because Hulme's art criticism was written just when Pound was separating himself from the imagist group and forging an allegiance with the vorticists. Hulme's distinction between 'attitudes' provided a forceful account of the difference between the modern artist and his or her immediate precursors; even better, Hulme's argument did not cut off the chosen modern works from all tradition, only recent tradition. In the important essay 'Vorticism' (1914), Hulme's essays provide the background to Pound's argument that modernist literature is both new *and* rooted in a productively distant past. Comparisons with the primitivism and abstraction of the visual arts are essential to Pound's argument: he compares his poem 'The Return', for example, with sculptures by Epstein and the vorticist Henri Gaudier-Brzeska (1891–1915), and relates 'In a Station of the Metro' to the aesthetic theories of the Russian painter Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944) (1970a: 85–86; Beasley 2007: 98–106).

ERNEST FENOLLOSA AND THE IDEOGRAM

In December 1913, Pound began editing the papers of the renowned American philosopher Ernest Fenollosa, at the invitation of Fenollosa's

widow. Fenollosa had lived and worked in Tokyo for many years as a professor of philosophy and political economy, and had become an expert on Japanese and Chinese art and literature. Among his papers was an essay, ‘The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry’, which Pound edited and published in the American literary journal, *The Little Review*, in 1919. In his preface to the essay Pound called it a ‘study of the fundamentals of all aesthetics’ (1936: 7), and the fact that the essay was published in a key modernist periodical underlines Pound’s belief that this was no obscure scholarly text, but rather a ground-breaking document of immediate relevance to modern poetry.

Fenollosa argued that Chinese was a naturally poetic language by virtue of the pictographic quality of its ideograms. Unlike English, for example, where the words ‘man sees horse’ have only an arbitrary relation to the things and process to which they refer, Chinese, Fenollosa writes, actually pictures that which it describes. Describing the Chinese figures below, Fenollosa interprets them as follows:

First stands the man on his two legs. Second, his eye moves through space: a bold figure represented by running legs under an eye, a modified picture of an eye, a modified picture of running legs, but unforgettable once you have seen it. Third stands the horse on his four legs.

(1936: 12)

Fenollosa was in fact wrong to think that Chinese was predominantly pictographic (the majority of Chinese characters are semantic-phonetic like English words), but his mistake was a productive one for Pound, who only later realized the essay’s limitations. The imagist (and symbolist) dream of a poetry that can present reality in all its immediacy appeared to be realized in Chinese.



The aspect of the essay that most interested Pound was Fenollosa’s argument that compound words in Chinese picture not only things, but the relationship between things. They therefore reflect the activity of the natural and human worlds: ‘the sun underlying the bursting

forth of plants = spring [. . .], “Rice-field” plus “struggle” = male’ (1936: 14). As these examples show, meaning is being made through metaphor: the abstract notion of ‘spring’ is conveyed by a picture of something that occurs during spring. Metaphor was already fundamental to Pound’s and Hulme’s modernism (the impact of ‘In a Station of the Metro’, for example, rests on seeing the faces as petals), but Fenollosa’s essay suggested that Chinese words were less static than their English equivalents, that they were inherently dynamic.

But what has this to do with history and literary tradition? The last few pages of Fenollosa’s essay turn to the subject of the evolution of language. Like the symbolists and the modernists, Fenollosa laments the utilitarian way language is used in modern life, robbed of its colour and suggestiveness – and of its history. For in our language, he says, there is nothing that shows how a word grows and changes, ‘it does not bear its metaphor on its face’ (1936: 29). But in Chinese, a word’s etymology is constantly visible: ‘thus a word, instead of growing gradually poorer and poorer as with us, becomes richer and still more rich from age to age, almost consciously luminous’ (1936: 29). Pound’s university training in philology had taught him that words contain history: tracking their use provides explanations of cultural change. Fenollosa’s (mis)understanding of the Chinese ideogram led him to believe it was a type of word that encapsulated history in spatial form (Frank 1991: 5–66). Unsurprisingly, Pound saw a connection between this aspect of Fenollosa’s argument and his ‘method of Luminous Detail’, and by the 1930s he had renamed the latter ‘the ideogrammic method’ (1991: 18–23, 96). Under this name it became the major structuring principle of *The Cantos*.

TRANSLATION

Given their insistence on non-English literature’s relevance to their own poetry, it should come as no surprise that Eliot, Hulme and Pound were active translators as well as poets. Pound is a particularly significant and innovative translator, but Hulme and Eliot also composed important translations. Between 1912 and 1914 Hulme published translations of Bergson’s ‘Introduction à la métaphysique’ (1903) (*An Introduction to Metaphysics* (1912, 1913)) and Georges Sorel’s *Réflexions sur la violence* (1908) (*Reflections on Violence* (1914, 1916)), and Eliot, besides translating for his journal, *The Criterion*, in 1930 published a

translation of Saint-John Perse's French poem *Anabase* (1924) (*Anabasis* (1930)). Eliot, Hulme and Pound translated in order to make foreign writings available to English readers, but this chapter's discussion should have suggested how translation might also be more centrally connected to the aims of the modernist poetic project. Eliot, Hulme and Pound consistently thought of their poetry in an international context; they were influenced by and measured themselves against poets from different places as well as different times. The 'tradition' Eliot advocates in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' is 'the whole of literature of Europe', from Homer onwards, and by the time he came to write *The Waste Land* it had expanded beyond European boundaries.

Eliot's, Hulme's and Pound's attitude towards language itself is also relevant here. I mentioned in Chapter 1 that by the early twentieth century there was a movement to understand language as a system, a set of rules, rather than a 'natural' means of expression. In a sense, therefore, all writing is translation – translation of experience into the system of language. In Chapter 2 we saw Hulme expressing this particularly vividly in his discussion of poetic imagery: 'nowadays, when one sees the hill is "clothed" with trees, the word suggests no physical comparison', he writes, 'To get the original visual effect one would have to say "ruffed", or use some new metaphor' (1994: 95). Pound makes a related point when he tells aspiring poets that 'translation is likewise good training, if you find that your original matter "wobbles" when you try to rewrite it. The meaning of the poem to be translated can not "wobble"' (1960: 7). For both poets there is a distinct gap between language and that which it describes, and the poet must manipulate language in order to find the most accurate and evocative means of expressing the poem's sense or 'meaning'.

This implies a certain theory of translation, one where the translator aims to recreate the *sense* of the original, rather than slavishly accounting for every word and grammatical point. This was certainly Pound's attitude towards translation, and it marks a shift away from nineteenth-century practice, which conceived of translation as a scholarly pursuit rather than a creative act. In 1915 Pound published *Cathay*, made up of 'translations' of fourteen Chinese poems drawn from Fenollosa's papers, and part of the Anglo-Saxon poem *The Seafarer*. Though he would later learn Chinese, in 1915 he was not able to translate from the

original sources, and instead produced his translations from Fenollosa's notes, themselves made from Japanese versions of the Chinese poems. The resulting poems are not, therefore, precise renderings of the Chinese, and in fact in one, 'The River Song', Pound mistakenly conflated two poems (Xie 1999: 235). Nevertheless, *Cathay* has been much admired since its first publication: it prompted Eliot to describe Pound as 'the inventor of Chinese poetry for our time', a description that captures both the influence of the volume, and the fact that the Chinese poetry it contains is a creation of Pound's, rather than a translation (1948a: 14). The same understanding was notoriously not extended to Pound's poem 'Homage to Sextus Propertius', intended, wrote Pound, not as a translation but a 'character sketch' of the Roman poet Sextus Propertius, but criticized at length for its inaccuracies in the press (Sullivan 1964: 5–12).

Eliot and Pound employed various types of translation in their own poetry. As well as translated excerpts from foreign sources (for example, Pound's use of 'Donna Me Prega' ('A lady asks me'), by Guido Cavalcanti (c. 1255–1300), in Canto 36), Eliot's and Pound's poems include many unacknowledged single lines and references (Eliot's title *Ara vos Prec* is a quotation from Dante's *Purgatorio*, meaning 'I implore you' in Provençal), and quotations of other poets' metre and rhyme schemes (Eliot uses an approximation of Dante's *terza rima* in part of 'Little Gidding'; Pound uses a version of *The Seafarer*'s metre in Canto 1). Learning the sources of these allusions undoubtedly contributes to our understanding of Eliot's and Pound's poetry, and the excellent guides now available make this straightforward (see 'Further Reading'). However, it is just as important to register the general point made by the poets' use of translation and allusion: our language is not our own, that is to say, the words we use have been used by others, they are formed by the intermingling of languages and cultures. Allusion and translation highlight this essential second-handedness of language, and the way it connects us to other language users. If a poet wants to convey the richness of human culture, why confine oneself to English? As Pound wrote in *The Cantos*, 'it can't be all in one language' (1994: 577).

SUMMARY

This chapter began by establishing the importance of literary tradition to Eliot and Pound, and noting that after his turn to classicism, Hulme also emphasized the value of tradition. Eliot's and Pound's extensive use of literary allusion is a means of bringing that literary tradition into their poetry, so that the texts and poets of the past are brought into the modern poetic text, collapsing historical time. All three poets reject the notion of history as progression or evolution, in favour of history as alternating cycles (classicism-romanticism-classicism, religious-humanist-religious). We reviewed three sources that stand behind this use of spatial form. Frazer and Upward made their arguments about the development of myth through the juxtaposition of vivid descriptions, Fenollosa saw the same principle of juxtaposition creating meaning within Chinese ideograms. The visual arts were making related experiments, creating a style Hulme interpreted as a return to a religious attitude. Juxtaposition suggested an organizing principle that could present history in poetry as a 'simultaneous order'. The importance of translation to modernist poetry is part of the same commitment to literary tradition.

THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND THE LONG POEM

Eliot's *The Waste Land* and Pound's *The Cantos* are not only major modernist poems; they have largely defined what we mean by modernist poetry. If they appear to be the definitive products of 'a new era of high aesthetic self-consciousness and non-representationalism, in which art turns from realism and humanistic representation towards style, technique and spatial form in pursuit of a deeper penetration of life' (Bradbury and McFarlane 1976: 25), as the modernist period has been described, it is not because they conform to an already-existing modernist template, but rather because the template itself was created from these works. These poems, therefore, should be understood less as representative of early twentieth-century poetry, than polemical and highly successful arguments about what poetry should be.

This chapter frames *The Waste Land* and *The Cantos* as war poems that present two specific challenges to their authors. First, they required the creation of a new *form* adequate to the immensely ambitious task of analysing the history of civilization; second, they required the invention of a new *method* of relating history that could avoid propaganda and maintain the integrity of the individual voice. The solution to the first lay in versions of what Eliot called in an essay on Joyce's *Ulysses* 'the mythical method', and the solution to the second was found in the study of drama and dramatic poetry.

WAR POETS

Britain declared war on the Central Powers on 4 August 1914. Eliot and Pound, as Americans, did not enlist (although during the course of the war both tried to). However, many of their friends joined the army, including the imagist poet Richard Aldington, from whom Eliot took over as assistant editor of *The Egoist*, the sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, Hulme, Wyndham Lewis, the leader of the vorticist movement, and Eliot's closest friend from his year in Paris, Jean Verdenal. In May 1915 Verdenal was killed, and a month later Gaudier met the same fate. Hulme was killed in September 1917.

Pound began serious work on *The Cantos* in 1915, during the second year of the war; Eliot first mentioned *The Waste Land* in a letter of November 1919, a year after the war ended, though the earliest fragments of the poem had been written at least five years before. The First World War shaped both poems substantially: it appears in the texts not only in the form of references to the events of 1914–1918, but also as a broader moral framework. Both poems treat the First World War as a symptom of their main subject: the disintegration of civilization in the modern world.

The Waste Land's first section, 'The Burial of the Dead', contains a Bavarian countess's childhood memories of the pre-war Austrian empire and references to sprouting corpses, 'A Game of Chess' describes Lil's preparations for welcoming her husband Albert home from the war, and 'What the Thunder Said' includes a description of the post-war collapse of Europe and the Middle East (lines 366–76). In *The Cantos*, the wartime leaders of Britain and the United States, David Lloyd George (1863–1945) and Woodrow Wilson (1856–1924), appear in the 'Hell Cantos' (14 and 15), their identity not quite obliterated by libel-conscious dots; another of the poem's villains is one of the war's wealthiest arms traders, Basil Zaharoff (1849–1936), called 'Metevsky' in the poem (1994: 61, 187). Canto 16 runs through anecdotes about Pound's friends who served in the war, including Hulme.

EPIC AMBITIONS

The subject matter of the war, and the deeper malaise it represented for Eliot and Pound, shaped the poems' form as well as their content. *The Waste Land* and *The Cantos* are extremely broad in scope, seeking

to analyse contemporary history through comparison of events and personalities in the present with those of past periods and other cultures. Pound later described *The Cantos* as a sequel to Dante's *Divine Comedy*: 'the first thing was this: you had six centuries that hadn't been packaged. It was a question of dealing with material that wasn't in the *Divina Commedia*' (Hall 1962: 38). Neither the imagist poem nor the Laforguean dramatic monologue was appropriate to this task: the traditional form for this subject matter was the epic.

But what would a modernist epic look like? When Eliot and Pound faced this problem in the early twentieth century, the modernist epic seemed a contradiction in terms. In the first chapter we saw that Hulme defined modern poetry in opposition to the epic and the ballad (1994: 53). The modernist poem, so far, had been concerned either with the impressions of the individual mind, or – as in the recent quatrain poems – social satire. In neither case had the poetry sustained a narrative or moved beyond the representation of a single point of view. And why would it? Narrative was no longer the preserve of poetry: if Homer or Dante were to write the *Odyssey* or *The Divine Comedy* in the twentieth century they would be unlikely to write in verse; they would, instead, write in the more flexible and expansive form of the novel.

Epic. A long narrative poem in an elevated style, celebrating the actions of a legendary hero or heroes. Homer's epics, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* (c. 900–750 BC), are the source of most conventions followed by subsequent epics in the Western tradition, such as Virgil's *Aeneid* (c. 29–19 BC), Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667) and Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (1590–1596).

La Divina Commedia (*The Divine Comedy*) (c. 1310–1314). Italian poem of a hundred cantos by Dante Alighieri (1265–1321) consisting of three parts, *Inferno* (*Hell*), *Purgatorio* (*Purgatory*) and *Paradiso* (*Paradise*). The poem describes the poet's journey from hell to paradise, guided first by Virgil and, through paradise, by Beatrice, the woman Dante had fallen in love with in childhood.

But it was not simply a question of expanding the modernist poem's form to emulate the novel. There was a philosophical problem to be solved: the intensely subjective mode of Eliot's and Pound's early verse arose not only from their admiration for the French symbolists, but also from their belief, following Bradley and Bergson respectively, that one could only speak with integrity about one's own experience. The great epics, however, depended on a shared belief structure through which to interpret and communicate experience: 'An epic is a poem containing history', Pound explained in an interview:

The modern mind contains heteroclit elements. The past epos have succeeded when all or a great many of the answers were assumed, at least between author and audience, or a great mass of audience. The attempt in an experimental age is therefore rash.

(Hall 1962: 47)

Where Dante had what Pound called an 'Aquinas-map', a theological system derived from the Christian philosophy of Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) (1971: 323), to guide him and his readers, twentieth-century poets and readers had no such agreed framework of 'answers'.

Eliot and Pound responded to these challenges by turning to a range of models – novels and dramatic works, as well as poetry. Eliot's clearest statement on this subject is 'Prose and Verse' (1921), in which he explicitly rejects an absolute distinction between poetry and prose and instead argues that 'we must be very tolerant of any attempt in verse that appears to trespass upon prose, or of any attempt in prose that appears to strive towards the condition of "poetry"'. In sentences which shed much light on the metrical variety of *The Waste Land*, Eliot writes, 'I see no reason why a considerable variety of verse forms may not be employed within the limits of a single poem [. . .]; We seem to see clearly enough that prose is allowed to be "poetic"; we appear to have overlooked the right of poetry to be "prosaic"' (Eliot 2005: 160, 163–64). Pound had been making the same point since 1913, when he drew attention to what he called 'the prose tradition' of poetry, a poetic tradition more closely related to the development of the realist novel than lyric poetry, and represented by the poetry of George Crabbe (1754–1832), William Wordsworth and Ford Madox Ford (1873–1939). In contrast to the introspection of pre-war modernist poetry, this tradition 'presents. It does not comment. It is irrefutable

Realism. In general, writing or art that appears to accurately record life, especially everyday or ordinary life. As a trend in European literature it is particularly associated with the mid-nineteenth century novel of middle-class life, pioneered by the French novelists Honoré de Balzac (1799–1850) and Gustave Flaubert (1821–1880), and the English novelist George Eliot (1819–1880).

because it does not present a personal predilection for any particular fraction of truth [. . .]. It does not attempt to justify anybody's ways to anybody or anything else' (1913: 662).

ULYSSES, ORDER AND MYTH

For Eliot and Pound alike the novelists they found most instructive were the nineteenth-century French realist novelist Gustave Flaubert and the contemporary they saw as Flaubert's major inheritor, James Joyce (1882–1941). Although Joyce's *Ulysses* was not published in book form until February 1922, Eliot and Pound were reading it up to four years before, having been sent sections of the manuscript by Joyce, and also in their editorial capacities at *The Egoist* (Eliot) and *The Little Review* (Pound), where the novel was serialized until prevented under obscenity laws. Pound's judgement after reading the beginning of the book was that 'It looks to me rather better than Flaubert', and on reading episode fifteen ('Circe') he proclaimed Joyce the modern Dante: 'Magnificent, a new Inferno in full sail' (1967: 130, 189). Eliot's reaction to the same chapter was similarly enthusiastic: 'stupendous', he wrote to Joyce, 'I have nothing but admiration; in fact, I wish, for my own sake, that I had not read it' (1988: 455).

Eliot's remark captures the mixture of admiration and anxiety that *Ulysses* induced: he and Pound immediately realized the significance of the novel for their own literary projects. Indeed, at an early stage of *The Waste Land*'s composition the poem opened with an account of a trip to a brothel apparently inspired by the end of Joyce's 'Circe' chapter (1971: 4–5). If Pound's prominent use of the *Odyssey* in the early cantos was independent of Joyce's influence (Bush 1976: 193), it nevertheless highlighted their common aims. *Ulysses* showed Eliot and Pound that though the twentieth-century epic would necessarily

lack the shared belief structure of Dante's 'Aquinias-map', mythologies deeply embedded in Western culture could provide the same ordering function. In 1923 Eliot published one of his most famous essays, '*Ulysses, Order and Myth*', which argued that Joyce's use of the *Odyssey* had 'the importance of a scientific discovery' in providing 'a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history'. Connecting *Ulysses*'s paralleling of the ancient and the contemporary with that of the anthropologists and ethnologists he had studied at Harvard, Eliot announced the birth of a new form: 'instead of narrative method, we may now use the mythical method' (1975: 177–78).

'*Ulysses, Order and Myth*' is as much an explanation of *The Waste Land* as it is of *Ulysses*, drawing readers' attention to the poem's 'mythical method' which Eliot also emphasized in its explanatory notes. There he wrote that he was indebted 'in general' to Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, and more specifically to another anthropological work of the same school, Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance* (1920), from which 'not only the title, but the plan and a good deal of the incidental symbolism of the poem' derived (1969a: 76). Weston's subject is the Christian legend of the search for the Holy Grail (the cup Christ used at the Last Supper), which she argues derives from the pre-Christian vegetation myths described by Frazer. Details vary between versions, but the main features of the Grail legend are that a knight searching for the Grail encounters an ill or injured king who rules a land wasted by either drought or war. The king and his land will be restored to health if the knight asks the correct question or questions. Weston connects the ruler of the wasteland, sometimes called the Fisher King, to the gods of vegetation myths, whose death and rebirth functioned as explanations of the seasons (Weston 1980: 19, 48).

The Waste Land does not follow the narrative structure of the Grail legend, as *Ulysses* follows the narrative structure of the *Odyssey*. Instead Eliot juxtaposes images and symbols from Frazer and Weston with literary allusions and sections of social satire to establish a continuity between the wasteland of the Grail legend and the wasteland of modern civilization, where ancient fertility rites have degraded into sordid sexual encounters. Versions of Weston's Fisher King recur throughout the poem: Shakespeare's King Alonso in *The Tempest*, thought by his son to have been drowned in a shipwreck, but reunited with him in the play's final act (l. 124–25); and Phlebas the Phoenician, the drowned

sailor of ‘Death by Water’, whose nationality associates him with the Phoenician-Greek god Adonis, whose effigy Frazer and Weston describe thrown into the sea and recovered (‘resurrected’) as part of a vegetation rite (Weston 1980: 40, 44; Frazer 2002: 224). Yet if *The Waste Land* repeatedly enacts a sacrificial drowning, it is death rather than resurrection that is emphasized, and the wasteland is not returned to fertility by the end of the poem. ‘Shall I at least set my lands in order?’ the Fisher King asks in the final paragraph of the poem. The response is a pile of quotations, ‘fragments I have shored against my ruins’, disordered. The final refrain, ‘Shantih shantih shantih’, translated by Eliot as ‘the peace which passeth understanding’ is inadequate to the task of resolving these fragments, a ‘way of stopping’ rather than a resolution (Crawford 1990: 149).

Eliot’s statements on the importance of Weston and Frazer to *The Waste Land* are somewhat misleading: while their work enabled him to draw together the central themes of religious and sexual sterility, the mythic framework was grafted on to the poem at a late stage, and was not part of its initial conception (Rainey 2005: 48–49). His statements suggest a more coherent poem than the one he wrote, one that corresponded more closely to his classicist ideal of the impersonal, well-ordered work of art. Pound’s remarks about *The Cantos* have a similar ordering intention that remains at odds with the poem itself: he told Yeats that there would be ‘no plot, no chronicle of events, no logic of discourse, but two themes, the Descent into Hades from Homer, a Metamorphosis from Ovid, and, mixed with these, mediaeval or modern historical characters’, organized in ‘a structure like that of a Bach Fugue’ (Yeats 1961b: 4). Instead of a plot, which implies a narrative progression, Pound proposes a repeating pattern, in which a subject is introduced in a series of different forms (like the different voices of a fugue), juxtaposed with a countersubject, or response.

The account of world history given in *The Cantos*, therefore, is one structured by the descents and metamorphoses of civilizations and individuals, but these ‘themes’ are very broadly conceived. Descents can be a point of crisis or a test and not necessarily a fall in fortunes; metamorphoses are the moment where an ideal is realized or made permanent. Examples of such descents are the details of political intrigues in Renaissance Italy that make up the Malatesta Cantos (cantos 8–11), the founding of the American republic in the Jefferson and John Adams Cantos (cantos 31–34, 62–71) and the description of five thousand

years of Chinese government in the *China Cantos* (52–61). Their corresponding metamorphoses could be interpreted as the building of the Tempio Malatestiano, the establishment of the Constitution of the United States and the composition of the Confucian Five Classics (Davenport 1983: 88). Pound coined the term ‘subject-rhyme’ to describe how ‘various things keep cropping up in the poem’ to forge comparisons between sections of cantos (1971: 210). Like Weston, Frazer and Eliot, then, Pound draws out the continuity between myths, legends and history, suggesting the permanence of certain ideas, emotions and beliefs. However, in accordance with his individualist politics, Pound differs from Eliot in attributing more control to individuals. So where the protagonists of *The Waste Land* – the typist, Lil, Mr. Eugenides, Phlebas – are victims or, at most, participants in civilization’s degradation, the protagonists of *The Cantos* – Sigismondo Malatesta, Confucius, John Adams – make the decisions that determine civilization’s course.

The attraction of myth for Eliot and Pound was that it could be used instead of narrative to bring order and unity to their long poems. Where a historical narrative would tend to suggest progression (and a romantic world view) the use of myth could present history as cyclical (a classicist world view). This went a long way towards solving the problem of form at the macro level of the poem. But it did not solve the difficulties at the micro level: how could one retain the integrity of individual experience, represented in Eliot’s and Pound’s early poetry by the single speaking voice, with the multiplied cast of an epic?

ART vs PROPAGANDA

The circumstances of the war made this question more urgent. In ‘Hugh Selwyn Mauberley’, Pound had attacked wartime propaganda and rhetoric, pouring scorn on the words and phrases used to justify the war and to persuade men to join the armed forces. But what particularly appalled him was that such rhetoric was not only circulated by the government’s official propaganda bureau; it was widely taken up by newspapers and journals, too, and so established as the truth about the war. His wartime essays argue that newspapers and journals contribute directly to international conflict by circulating nationalistic clichés that make their way into the public consciousness (1915: 449, 471).

The experience of wartime propaganda generated widespread suspicion of writing that sought to persuade one of a particular point of view or circumvent analytical thought. This affected not only journalism, but literary work too – after all, well-known writers, like Arnold Bennett, Ford Madox Ford, John Masefield and H.G. Wells, had worked for the government’s propaganda bureau (Buitenhuis 1989: 14–15). If Eliot and Pound were to write poetry that analysed their historical situation with integrity, they would need to find a way of presenting their interpretation that was emphatically anti-propagandist and resisted easy phrasing.

Hulme addresses these issues in some of his last writings, though the propaganda he opposed was not the pro-war propaganda Pound was discussing, but, on the contrary, the arguments of the pacifist movement. In his series of ‘War Notes’ (1915–16) Hulme argues that the war is necessary to preserve British freedom, and that pacifist arguments against war are based on unexamined abstractions about man’s natural goodness that take no account of the ‘facts’ of the current political situation. These abstractions have been internalized and naturalized to the point that the pacifist believes them to be universal truths. The problem for Hulme is that because these arguments have been so thoroughly internalized as truths, facts about the war will not change the pacifists’ minds. So, he says, one must address the broader beliefs that underpin pacifism: romanticism or humanism (1994: 351, 359, 380–86).

Although there is much in this argument that we have encountered in Hulme’s writings before, the specific focus on how ideas are internalized draws on the work of Georges Sorel, a French anarchist-syndicalist allied with the Action Française, whose *Réflexions sur la violence* (*Reflections on Violence*) Hulme had translated in 1914. In an introduction added to the translation in 1916, Hulme praised Sorel for revealing democracy as an ideology, rather than ‘a natural and inevitable equipment of the emancipated and instructed man’. Ideologies, wrote Hulme, have to be removed ‘from their position “behind the eye” and put ‘facing one as *objects* which we can then consciously accept or reject’. A ‘historical method’ that shows ‘the intimate connection between such conceptions – that of *Progress* for example – and certain economical conditions at the time of their invention in the eighteenth century, does more than anything else to loosen their hold over the mind’ (1994: 248). Eliot reviewed Hulme’s translation in 1917, describing

Ideology. A world view or system of belief that determines political and social action. It is most often used pejoratively, for example in Marxist philosophy, where ideology refers to the world view of the ruling class.

Sorel as ‘representative of the present generation, sick with its own knowledge of history’, and longing ‘for the pessimistic classical view’ (1917: 478–79). Not surprisingly, Eliot was sympathetic to Sorel’s anti-romantic theory of history – so much so that when he gave a series of lectures on ‘Modern French Literature’ to university extension students in 1916, he included Hulme’s translation of *Reflections on Violence* in his reading list (Schuchard 1999: 30).

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The Waste Land and *The Cantos* may be read as an ideology critique of the kind Hulme set out in his introduction to *Reflections on Violence*. Both poems question and severely criticize the religious, social and political ideologies that structure our lives. But to retain the integrity of the poetry, the poems’ arguments cannot be made in the authorial voice: that would be to descend to the level of the propagandist. Instead, Eliot and Pound make their poems out of many voices – some imaginary, some quoted from written sources – that speak as if directly to the reader, without the mediation or interpretation of the author. ‘You cannot create a very large poem without introducing a more impersonal point of view, or splitting it up into various personalities’, remarked Eliot (1980: 321). To use Hulme’s terms, in these poems, ideas appear ‘facing one as *objects* which we can then consciously accept or reject’ (1994: 248).

Before Eliot’s reading of Jessie Weston suggested the title of *The Waste Land*, the poem was called ‘He Do the Police in Different Voices’, a quotation from *Our Mutual Friend* (1864–1865) by Charles Dickens (1812–1870) that praises a character’s newspaper-reading skills. The original title is an apt summary of the poem’s dramatic qualities, and indeed drama and dramatic poetry were important models for *The Waste Land* and *The Cantos*. During the period in which he was conceiving and writing *The Waste Land*, Eliot wrote a series of journal articles on drama, most of which were collected in *The Sacred Wood* (1920).

In ‘The Possibility of Poetic Drama’, he foregrounds the problem of finding an appropriate form to represent contemporary concerns. The Elizabethans, he argues, found it in blank verse drama, but the new experiences of industrial modernity that began in the nineteenth century have as yet found no equivalent form to express them. What Eliot is calling for here is not just a metrical form, but a ‘framework’ that contains within it ‘a precise way of thinking and feeling’, ‘the “temper of the age”’. Poetic drama seems to suggest that one can maintain the integrity of subjective experience, while presenting that experience in an expanded, objective form: ‘The essential is to get upon the stage this precise statement of life which is at the same time a point of view, a world’ (1976: 63–64, 68; Bush 1984: 47–48).

While Eliot was thinking through this problem in relation to Elizabethan drama, Pound found inspiration in two quite different locations: Japanese Noh drama and the dramatic poetry of Robert Browning. In 1914, at the end of his essay, ‘Vorticism’, Pound had related that he was ‘often asked whether there can be a long imagiste or vorticist poem’. His answer then was that he ‘saw nothing against a long vorticist poem’, and as evidence he cited the Noh drama he was at that time translating from Ernest Fenollosa’s papers: ‘in the best “Noh” the whole play may consist of one image. I mean it is gathered about one image’ (1970a: 94). However, unlike imagism, and the Japanese haiku to which it was indebted, Noh plays were part of a series: five plays were typically performed together, and the whole, Pound thought, ‘presents, or symbolizes, a complete diagram of life and recurrence’ (1970c: 222). Indeed, in 1917 Pound compared *The Cantos* to what has been called the archetypal Noh play, *Takasago* (Bush 1976: 108). Although Pound was specifically drawing attention to their shared theme (that of human and divine love, mirrored in an ideal relationship between humanity and nature) Noh drama also made a vital contribution to *The Cantos*’ structure. Just as Eliot saw that the formal qualities of poetic drama expanded the insights of the single speaker without losing integrity, Pound admired Noh drama for its presentation of single units built up into a complex statement of meaning – what Pound now called the ‘ideogrammic method’.

If Noh drama showed Pound how his long poem could be built up from sections of poetry ‘gathered about one image’, the work of Robert Browning suggested how he might solve the equally pressing problem of relating those sections to each other and conveying their

significance. Browning's poetry had been a major model for Pound since his college years, when he had written imitations of the dramatic monologues. When planning *The Cantos*, however, Pound turned for inspiration to Browning's long, famously difficult poem about the thirteenth-century Provençal troubadour, *Sordello* (1840). *Sordello* begins with the narrator explaining that to relate the story of Sordello he will not use the method of dramatic monologue, where the protagonist speaks directly to the reader, instead he will adopt the method of a showman of a diorama (an early form of cinema), who presents the images to his audience with apparent objectivity, but also adds a commentary. Browning thus creates a framework in which the story of Sordello can be told with the immediacy of a dramatic monologue, but which also accommodates substantial intervention from the narrator, who comments on the story, explains jumps in the narrative and discusses the relationship between the thirteenth-century story and the nineteenth-century present. Pound recorded his admiration for *Sordello* and its device of the narrator-showman in the first published canto (1917), which began with the lament 'Hang it all, there can be but one *Sordello!*', and went on to suggest ways of adapting Browning's poem for 'the modern world' (1917: 113). That canto, along with the second and third published, was all but deleted from *The Cantos* as it now exists, and the debate with Browning disappeared. But the method remains and is literalized in cantos 4 and 12 where Pound pictures himself in the Verona Arena, looking down and commenting on the action of the poem (1994: 16, 53).

Pound dramatizes this method succinctly in his opening canto, a translation of the section of the *Odyssey* in which Odysseus calls up the souls of the dead. What Pound seems to want to suggest by beginning with this passage is that he will not merely describe the actions and ideas of figures from history; instead he will, like Odysseus, call up the dead and let them speak directly to the reader. This, indeed, is the method of much of *The Cantos*, which is so full of direct quotation from the diaries, letters and documents of what Pound called 'factive personalities' that it verges on an anthology (1970b: 194). United States presidents such as Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, sages and prophets such as Confucius, Renaissance rulers such as Sigismondo Malatesta, are quoted at length as sources of wisdom. But at the same time, even in the first canto, Pound reminds us that history is never conveyed without some form of mediation. The section from the *Odyssey* is, after

all, a translation, and in fact, Pound reveals at the end of the first canto that it is a translation of a translation. His English translation derives not from a Greek source, but from Andreas Divus's Renaissance Latin translation of the Greek. In this way Pound performs a delicate balancing act: he affirms the integrity of the individual voice, but he simultaneously reminds us that transmission inevitably affects the voice.

The Waste Land does not begin with such a directly programmatic account of its intentions, but it does contain vignettes which, like Pound's use of the *Odyssey*, can be read as descriptions of the poem's method. In 'The Burial of the Dead', we attend a tarot card reading by Madame Sosostris, 'famous clairvoyante', who sets out a series of cards before the reader that introduce several of the poems' key figures. Like Madame Sosostris, Eliot presents us with a series of fragmented images or condensed narratives that singly are meaningless, but juxtaposed suggest an interpretation of the present, if not the future. But, like Pound, Eliot establishes his integrity by pointing out the shortcomings of his own method, and Madame Sosostris is implicitly compared with the rather more famous prophet, the blind Tiresias, on whom Eliot provides a tantalizing note: 'Tiresias, although a mere spectator and not indeed a "character", is yet the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest [. . .]. What Tiresias *sees*, in fact, is the substance of the poem' (1969a: 78).

Critics have tended to see Eliot's remark about Tiresias's unifying eye, like his insistence on the importance of Frazer and Weston, as truer to the poet's intention than to the poem's actuality. But this disjunction itself is important, and indicative of a characteristic feature of modernist writing. As readers, we may choose to emphasize either the poems' will to order, or the fragmentation that is a sign of their integrity – but both are present. In *The Waste Land*, Tiresias's eye might try to unite the poem's protagonists, but Eliot also invokes Bradley's arguments on the privacy of the self (1969a: 74, 80). In *The Cantos*, the fugal structure suggests an overall coherence and completion, but Pound approvingly quotes Confucius on 'historians [who] left blanks in their writings, / I mean for things they didn't know' (1971: 210; 1994: 60).

The Waste Land and *The Cantos* make us question many of our pre-suppositions about poetry, authors, readers and even the act of reading itself. If we turn back to the previous chapter, we can see that these poems are the practical application of many of the ideas on these subjects

Eliot and Pound explored in their essays. Most obviously, both poems highlight the fact that they exist within a literary tradition, through allusion, quotation and translation. We are encouraged to see *The Waste Land* and *The Cantos* as parts of a vast textual landscape, parts of the ‘simultaneous order’, which also contains Dante’s *Divina Commedia*, Homer’s *Odyssey*, Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde*, and the letters of Thomas Jefferson. Eliot’s ‘Impersonal theory of poetry’ is pushed to an extreme, demonstrating the collaborative nature of all literary works, however original they seem to be (Eliot 1980: 14, 18).

The Waste Land was a collaborative work in a very literal way. When the facsimile of *The Waste Land* manuscripts was published in 1971, it showed the extent of Pound’s editorial work on the poem; the manuscripts provided, as Eliot had remarked, ‘irrefutable evidence of Pound’s critical genius’ (Sutton 1963: 17). Pound worked on the drafts during January 1922, making major cuts from the beginnings of parts one, three and four and from the middle section of part three (the typist section), and suggesting many more changes to individual words and phrases. This is not the place to give a detailed account of Pound’s editing (see Badenhausen 2004: 62–110, Eliot 2005: 23–25); the point to emphasize here is that Eliot and Pound had successfully created a literary context where editorial intervention and collaboration could be celebrated as part of the creative process. Their essays, as we saw in the previous chapter, emphasized the close relationship between the critical and the poetic, and in fact Eliot saw this as a marker of the modern classicist stance. In 1923 he wrote that the romantic tends to ‘propound the thesis that the great artist is an unconscious artist’ and therefore ‘overlooks the capital importance of criticism in the work of creation itself. Probably, indeed, the larger part of the labour of an author in composing his work is critical labour; the labour of sifting, combining, constructing, expunging, correcting, testing: this frightful toil is as much critical as creative’ (1980: 30).

SUMMARY

In *The Waste Land* and *The Cantos* Eliot and Pound reinvented the long poem for the twentieth century. They did so without returning to a narrative style, but instead using allusion to myth and legend as a framework that could order their historical material and provide structural signposts, an equivalent of Dante's 'Aquinias-map', for their readers. Nevertheless, few first-time readers are struck by the structural unity of the poems: the impression is more reliably one of fragmentation and disorder, produced by the lack of a consistent authorial presence to direct the reader through the poems. The reader must make their own way through the sections of the poems, working out the ideas and arguments of the many personae as they proceed, for Eliot and Pound supply minimal explanation and interpretation. In this, they react against the tendency, so evident during the First World War, to turn literature into propaganda.

MODERNISM AND THE IDEAL SOCIETY

The First World War turned the modernists from poet-aesthetes cultivating the objective correlative and the image into poet-critics concerned with the regeneration of society. In his preface to the 1928 edition of *The Sacred Wood*, Eliot commented that, since writing its emphatically literary essays eight years before, he had 'passed on to another problem not touched upon in this book: that of the relation of poetry to the spiritual and social life of its time and of other times' (1976: viii). Pound, more candidly, remarked that 'the symbolist position, artistic aloofness from world affairs, is no good now' (1921: 1). During the 1920s, as Europe struggled to recover from the social and economic effects of the war, Eliot and Pound joined many other intellectuals disillusioned with the political leadership in setting out their own analyses of the post-war situation and their prescriptions for a way forward.

This chapter is concerned with Eliot's and Pound's social beliefs – and 'belief' is an appropriate word here. Eliot joined the Anglican Church in 1927 and presented his social proposals from a Christian standpoint. Pound, profoundly averse to institutional religion, nevertheless underwent what critics have described as an ideological 'conversion experience' after the war: to a theory of economics that was the major formative influence on his political and social ideas (Surette 1999: 13). In turning from the literary to the public sphere,

Eliot and Pound sought out new audiences, and their writing began to cross a range of genres: in the 1920s both poets founded periodicals that published social comment alongside literature, Pound began to popularize his literary and economic ideas in the form of textbooks, and Eliot began to write for the theatre.

CONVERSIONS I: ELIOT AND CHRISTIANITY

'It is proverbially easier to destroy than to construct', Eliot begins his 1928 essay 'The Humanism of Irving Babbitt', 'when a writer is skilful in destructive criticism, the public is satisfied with that. If he has no constructive philosophy, it is not demanded; if he has, it is overlooked. This is especially true when we are concerned with critics of society' (1980: 471). Here Eliot sums up the problem he faced as he turned to social criticism in the 1920s: the philosophy he had developed in reference to Babbitt, Hulme and Maurras had provided tools for the diagnosis of society's problems, but not for their cure. The classicist's pessimistic view of human nature gave little hope that individuals could solve the problems of post-war civilization by themselves.

This was the main point of Eliot's argument against Irving Babbitt's social criticism. Babbitt's humanism was inadequate to the task of social reform because it placed too much emphasis on the individual's ability to improve him or herself. Without an external framework, such as religion, 'there is nothing left for the individual to check himself by but his own private notions and his judgment, which is pretty precarious' and, furthermore, nothing to bring individuals together into a unified group (1980: 476). Extending the argument of 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', Eliot argued that social reform could not be achieved by individual responses to the contemporary situation, it must draw on the social traditions individuals already shared:

Our problem being to form the future, we can only form it on the materials of the past; we must *use* our heredity instead of denying it. The religious habits of the race are still very strong, in all places, at all times, and for all people. There is no humanistic habit.

(1980: 473)

For Eliot, like Hulme, classicism led logically to religion. Without chronological knowledge of Eliot's thought, one might have assumed

that his Christianity was responsible for his conservative philosophical and aesthetic ideas; in fact, the reverse was true. Eliot's philosophy and aesthetics led to and shaped his Christianity.

Eliot was baptized into the Anglican Church on 29 June 1927, and the following year he publicly announced his new affiliation in the preface to a volume of essays, *For Lancelot Andrewes* (1928). The essays were intended to mark a change of direction in Eliot's criticism, to 'indicate certain lines of development' that would be elaborated in later work, and to disassociate himself 'from certain conclusions which have been drawn from [...] *The Sacred Wood*'. He described the 'point of view' of his criticism as 'classicism in literature, royalism in politics, and anglo-catholic in religion' and the first essay, on Lancelot Andrewes, the seventeenth-century Bishop of Winchester (1555–1626), indicates how this might be distinguished from the point of view of his earlier criticism (1928a: ix). In the essay's comparison of Andrewes and Donne, Eliot implies a distinction he made explicit elsewhere between philosophical poetry, in which 'a philosophical system is felt as a whole by the poet, when it affects the structure of his poem; when in fact it is *believed*' and metaphysical poetry, which 'can occur either with or without belief' but shows 'the intimate relation between our philosophical beliefs and private feelings and behaviour' (1993: 293). Donne is Eliot's prime example of the metaphysical poet; Dante, and now Andrewes, are examples of the philosophical poet. In his earlier criticism, Eliot had represented metaphysical poetry as a type of philosophical poetry without favouring one over the other, but the final pages of '*Lancelot Andrewes*' suggest that Eliot now rates the philosophical poetry of belief more highly:

Andrewes's emotion is purely contemplative; it is not personal, it is wholly evoked by the object of contemplation, to which it is adequate; his emotions wholly contained in and explained by its object. But with Donne there is always the something else [...], Donne is a "personality" in a sense in which Andrewes is not: his sermons, one feels, are a 'means of self-expression'.

(1980: 351)

Eliot's earlier criticism had represented philosophical and religious systems as useful tools for the poet; in *For Lancelot Andrewes* they are no longer tools to be taken up or discarded at will: they inform every aspect of the poet's work.

'ASH-WEDNESDAY'

Dante and Lancelot Andrewes provide the main sources for 'Ash-Wednesday' (1930), traditionally read as Eliot's conversion poem. Drawing on Dante's *Vita Nuova* (c. 1292–1294), a volume of poetry Eliot considered 'antiromantic' in its refusal 'to expect more from *life* than it can give or more from *human* beings than they can give', 'Ash-Wednesday' describes the speaker's struggle to turn away from human desires and ambitions towards a spiritual life, caught in 'the time of tension between dying and birth / The place of solitude' (1980: 275; 1969a: 98). The dominant motif of the poem, the 'turn' to God and away from the world, is taken from Andrewes's 1619 Ash-Wednesday sermon on a Biblical text: 'Therefore also, now (saith the Lord); Turne you unto Me' (Moody 1980: 137). The discipline and austerity of the religious life is conveyed by the tightly controlled style and simple vocabulary: key phrases and images are repeated and patterned throughout the poem (such as the phrase 'I do not hope to turn again' in the first and final sections, and the oppositions between rocks and trees throughout). Eliot had been refining this mature style in earlier poems, 'The Hollow Men' (1925) and the first Ariel poems, 'The Journey of the Magi', 'A Song for Simeon' and 'Animula' (1927–1929), and it is a marked departure from the style of *The Waste Land*. Where *The Waste Land* was characterized by the fragmented images and dissonant rhythms of modern life, 'Ash-Wednesday' conveys the unity and order of religious liturgy.

CONVERSIONS II: POUND AND ECONOMIC REFORM

Pound's recommendations for post-war civilization were strikingly different from Eliot's call for a return to Christian values. Like many in Britain's depressed post-war period, Pound believed the answer lay in economic reform, specifically the Social Credit proposals of C.H. Douglas (1879–1952), an engineer-turned-economist he had met in the office of *The New Age* in 1918. Douglas was one of a number of economists during the early twentieth century who criticized orthodox capitalism and classical economics from an underconsumptionist standpoint. Douglas argued that, despite the industrial expansion of the last century, the majority of producers and consumers were not better off than

before: wealth was becoming ever more concentrated in a small number of pockets. The key problem was not with the production of wealth, but with its circulation. The majority of people could not afford to buy their share of the nation's produce, and the wealthy had no desire to buy up the shortfall. Instead, the wealthy either saved their money, withdrawing it from circulation, or invested it to finance further production, increasing the surplus of products and, as they were paid back on their investments, their own wealth. One category of the wealthy which came under particular scrutiny during this period was that of banks and financiers who, by extending credit to producers (including the State) at interest, could potentially exert more control over the economy than could the State (Douglas 1920a: 22, 1920b: 30, 77; Redman 1991: 52–53, 59).

From Pound's point of view, one of Douglas's most important insights concerned the 'cultural heritage' of society: everyone should share in the world's wealth because it is not produced by individuals or individual businesses in isolation, but rather by an accumulation of knowledge and invention over centuries. Douglas proposed to increase the consumption of products, and therefore the circulation of wealth, by two methods. First he advocated that the State distribute a national dividend to employed and unemployed alike: wages alone would never enable adequate consumption because prices were set to cover the cost of paying wages *and* the cost of production. Douglas's second proposal was that the State determine a fixed 'just price' for each product, calculated to limit profit (Douglas 1920b: 113–14, 134; Redman 1991: 64–65).

Douglas's proposals were not adopted in Britain, though his underconsumptionist critique played a part in the revolution of economics launched by John Maynard Keynes (1883–1946) in the 1930s. Pound, however, advocated Social Credit in his journalism, in specialist tracts, in letters to people he believed might influence government policy, and in his poetry. In the mid-1930s he came across the work of the

Underconsumptionist economics. Explains economic stagnation and depression as caused by the inability of consumer demand to keep pace with production.

German economist Silvio Gesell (1862–1930), whose practical proposals for monetary reform seemed to provide a way of putting Social Credit ideas into action. Gesell proposed a system of paper money, ‘stamp scrip’, whose value depreciated over time, and therefore discouraged hoarding and financial speculation and compelled circulation and the transformation of money into material wealth. From this point Pound advanced economic policies that were a synthesis of Social Credit’s general analysis of the relationship between the economy and society, and Gesell’s theory of money.

Pound writes his economic beliefs into *The Cantos* both literally and figuratively. They appear literally in the form of passages of theoretical explanation, such as the description of Douglas’s ‘A + B theorem’ in Canto 38, and in accounts of economic history, for example, in Cantos 42 to 44, in which Pound presents his research into the founding of the seventeenth-century Sienese bank, the Monte dei Paschi, and Cantos 88 and 89, where he discusses the US Bank War of the 1830s. Pound’s aim is to educate his readers in the background to the contemporary economic situation, which he had come to believe was the major cause of the First World War: ‘no one can understand history without understanding economics’, he wrote (1935: 5).

One critic has described the ‘central drama’ of *The Cantos* as ‘the historical struggle between abundance and scarcity’ (Marsh 1998: 117), which succinctly describes how Pound uses economics more figuratively in the poem. The equations he draws between economic practice and much broader issues are most clearly articulated in Canto 45, known as the ‘Usura Canto’. Here, usury (lending money at interest) is represented as the source of all social and cultural problems: it stifles creativity ('no picture is made to endure nor to live with / but it is made to sell and sell quickly / with usura'), devalues individual labour ('Stonecutter is kept from his stone / weaver is kept from his loom / WITH USURA), and prioritizes international profit over local produce ('wool comes not to market / sheep bringeth no gain with usura') (1994: 229–30). Above all, usury is a ‘sin against nature’ and Pound associates it with unnatural excess: it changes values at will and blurs the correct relationships between things. Nature, by contrast, is associated with the values he had been promoting since his imagist days: order, balance and precise definitions, or in Pound’s Chinese shorthand, ‘ching ming’: ‘right name’ (1994: 252, 333, 382, 400).

FASCISM

In 1921 Pound moved to Paris; in 1924 he left Paris for Italy. Italy had always played an important role in Pound's life and poetry: he regularly holidayed there, he read and researched medieval Italian poetry, and he considered the early Italian Renaissance the high point of human civilization. In 1922 he began researching the life of Sigismondo Malatesta (1417–1468), the fifteenth-century ruler of Rimini. Sigismondo was a tyrannical ruler, but in *The Cantos* Pound chose to emphasize instead his patronage of the arts and his love for his mistress (later wife), Isotta degli Atti. Pound thought that these two defining aspects of Sigismondo came together in his rebuilding of the thirteenth-century church of San Francesco, known as the Tempio Malatestiano, which Pound erroneously believed to have been dedicated to Isotta (Rainey 1991: 33–36). Pound saw the Tempio as a monument to productive patronage and romantic love, and he was willing to argue that Sigismondo's duplicitous and violent nature was justified by his achievements: 'tyrants / Were most efficient in all that they set their hands to' (1994: 31).

1922 was also the year that Benito Mussolini and his Fascist Party seized control of the Italian government, and there is evidence to suggest that this was a factor in Pound's move to Italy. Certainly, his journalism and letters demonstrate that he saw Italy as more vibrant than London or Paris during this period, and by 1924 he had begun to hope that Mussolini's rule would inaugurate a new Renaissance and, what is more, that there would be a role in it for Pound himself. Pound gained an audience with Mussolini in 1933, at which Mussolini pronounced *The Cantos* 'divertente' (amusing), as Pound tells us in Canto 41: he chose to interpret this comment as evidence of Mussolini's perspicacity. Though some of his economic and social reforms shared common ground

Fascism. Term first used by Mussolini in 1919 for his Italian political movement, and later adopted by Adolf Hitler in Germany and Francisco Franco in Spain. Common elements of fascist movements are nationalism (often racist and anti-Semitic in nature), anti-communism and anti-democracy, and a cult of strong leadership.

with Pound's ideas, Mussolini did not see Pound as a potential adviser. Nevertheless, Pound actively promoted Mussolini and Italian fascism, notably through his book *Jefferson and/or Mussolini* (1935), his letters to US politicians and his radio broadcasts to US troops during the Second World War. For Pound, Jefferson and Mussolini were examples of intelligent leaders who acted decisively to improve material and cultural conditions – like Sigismondo. Their actions were creative, according to Pound, and by the 1930s the distinction has disappeared between the strong leader and the artist: both are seen as bringing order to chaos.

How do we approach *The Cantos*, knowing the extent of Pound's fascist sympathies? Should we protect ourselves from its propaganda and remove it from our reading? Should we read it despite the fascism and seek out its less politically charged sections? The weight of critical opinion is against both repression and censorship: fascism is part of our history, including our cultural history, and to pretend otherwise is to delude ourselves. It is in this intellectual climate that critical attention has begun to extend from Pound's early cantos and the lyrical *Pisan Cantos* (1948), to the authoritarian *Rock-Drill* (1955) and *Thrones* (1959). In 1943 Pound was indicted for treason against the United States, and in 1945 incarcerated by the US army in Pisa. The cantos he wrote while imprisoned there begin with a lament for Mussolini and the sense of hope he had represented for Pound and, Pound thought, for the Italian people. The execution of Mussolini represents, he writes, 'the enormous tragedy of the dream in the peasant's bent shoulders' (1994: 439). After his release from St Elizabeth's Hospital for the Criminally Insane in 1958, Pound neither reiterated nor recanted his fascism. His retreat into depression and virtual silence during the last decade of his life, and the last fragmentary lines of *The Cantos*, have been interpreted by some as contrition.

Pound and Eliot are usually seen as part of a single political trend in modernism, but in fact their politics are in many ways antithetical. Both were anti-democratic and, from the 1920s, authoritarian, but Pound's politics were revolutionary, whereas Eliot's were conservative. Eliot himself spelled out the difference between their politics in his notorious *After Strange Gods* (1934), three lectures delivered at the University of Virginia in 1933. There Eliot criticizes Pound's 'Hell Cantos' for not distinguishing between 'essential Evil and social

accidents' (1934: 42). Eliot is right: Pound, unlike Eliot, does not believe in 'essential Evil': he believes evil to be socially produced, and that education and knowledge can eradicate it. *The Cantos* is, therefore, directed towards educating its readers and providing a blueprint for a paradise on earth. Eliot, on the other hand, believes in the reality of original sin and therefore that the human race cannot create an earthly paradise. In 'Catholicism and International Order' (1933), he contrasted his own Anglo-Catholic position with that of the 'heretic', a category in which he included Pound:

The Catholic should have high ideals – or rather, I should say *absolute* ideals – and moderate expectations: the heretic, whether he call himself fascist, or communist, or democrat or rationalist, always has low ideals and great expectations. For I say that all ambitions of an earthly paradise are informed by low ideals.

(1936: 122)

Pound's support for Italian fascism was unequivocal; Eliot's position on fascism is the subject of continued debate. Central to the issue is his editorship of *The Criterion*, founded in 1922 as a literary review, but by the time of Eliot's conversion in 1927 eschewing the 'narrowly literary' in favour of presenting the 'tendency' of classicism as exemplified by Sorel, Maurras, Julien Benda, Hulme, Jacques Maritain and Babbitt (1926: 3, 5). In 1928, Eliot published 'The Literature of Fascism' in *The Criterion*, a review of five books that argued for and against Mussolini's government. His tone is sceptical: while approving of a political system that prioritizes order and authority, he doubts these are the preserve of Italian fascism, or that an exported fascism would establish those values in England. He recommends instead the politics of Charles Maurras's Action Française: 'Most of the concepts which might have attracted me in fascism I seem already to have found, in a more digestible form, in the work of Charles Maurras' (1928b: 288–89). It seems clear, therefore, that Eliot explicitly rejects fascism and reasserts his support of Action Française. But, as C.K. Stead has pointed out, 'in every respect Action Française, which he favoured, was more illiberal, more "reactionary", than Mussolini's party' (1986: 205). Maurras, indeed, collaborated with the fascists after France fell to the Nazis in 1940, and was found guilty of treason in 1945.

ANTI-SEMITISM

This discussion of Eliot's and Pound's attitudes towards fascism also raises the issue of their anti-Semitism. Pound was virulently anti-Semitic in his poetry, prose, radio broadcasts and personal letters, especially during the 1930s; Eliot's anti-Semitic remarks in his poetry and prose are limited to a smaller number of instances. While the extent of Pound's anti-Semitism is unquestioned, Eliot's continues to be debated. The anti-Semitic lines of 'Gerontion', 'Burbank with a Baedeker', 'Dirge' (a deleted section of *The Waste Land*) and *After Strange Gods*, to take the most notorious examples, have long been the subject of discussion, but the debate intensified with the publication of Anthony Julius's thorough and uncompromising *T.S. Eliot, Anti-Semitism, and Literary Form* (1995). Julius argued that the instances of anti-Semitism could not be separated out from Eliot's *oeuvre*; rather, they were part of an active, creative 'exploitation of anti-Semitic discourse' that was 'an inseparable part of his greater literary undertaking' (1995: 29). In 2003, when the journal *Modernism/Modernity* published a debate on the topic between seven leading modernist scholars, five of the seven argued that Eliot and his writings were anti-Semitic.

Looking back from our post-Holocaust perspective, we might think this anti-Semitism was a product of, and evidence of, fascist sympathy. In truth, it was largely independent of the fascist influence, but the fact that it was maintained during the period of fascist atrocities against Jews is relevant and deplorable. It is often, rightly, pointed out that anti-Semitism was extremely widespread in the early twentieth century. But this is no excuse, and in any case Eliot's and Pound's anti-Semitism was not in the mode of casual prejudice: it was a structural component in their ideologies. Pound made Jews a scapegoat in his conspiracy theory of history, identifying them with the banking practices he deplored. Eliot's belief in a homogeneous Christian society led him to state in *After Strange Gods* that 'reasons of race and religion combine to make any large number of free-thinking Jews undesirable' (1934: 20). Although after the Second World War, Eliot regretted 'the whole tone' of *After Strange Gods* and refused to allow it to be reprinted, he did not retract that sentence, nor the pre-war anti-Semitic poems (Ricks 1988: 47). Similarly, though Pound later referred to his anti-Semitism as 'a stupid, suburban prejudice', he made no adequate or public apology (Carpenter 1988: 899).

CULTURE

Eliot's and Pound's mature work is profoundly concerned with the maintenance of culture. Whether we agree or disagree with their definitions of culture and their recommendations for its protection, their insistence on its importance for all parts of society is one of the most valuable elements of their legacy. Both poets wrote treatises on culture: Pound published *Guide to Kulchur* in 1938; Eliot published *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* in 1948. But what do they mean by this famously difficult word? For Eliot, culture is '*a way of life*', which includes 'all the characteristic activities and interests of a people'. For mid-twentieth-century Britain Eliot suggests an indicative list of: 'Derby Day, Henley Regatta, Cowes, the twelfth of August, a cup final, the dog races, the pin table, the dart board, Wensleydale cheese, boiled cabbage cut into sections, beetroot in vinegar, nineteenth-century Gothic churches and the music of Elgar'. It is also closely related to religion, in fact the culture of a people is '*the incarnation of its religion*': 'we can see a religion as the *whole way of life* of a people [...] and that way of life is also its culture'. According to Eliot, 'no culture can appear or develop except in relation to a religion' (1967: 27, 31, 41).

Where Eliot argues that culture develops in relation to religion, Pound argues for its relationship with philosophy. In fact, he deplores the rise of Christianity in the West, which he sees as taking the place in everyday life that philosophy had occupied in ancient Greece. By the twentieth century, he laments, philosophy is thought of as highbrow, 'I mean as distinct from roast beef and the facts of life, as distinct from the things that come natural'. However, in the East, philosophy, in the form of the teachings of Confucius (551–479 BC), remained integrated with daily life, and Pound recommends Confucian values as a basis for culture, as Eliot had recommended Christianity: 'Confucius offers a way of life, an *Anschauung* or disposition toward nature and man and a system for dealing with both'. (Between 1928 and 1954 Pound published five book-length translations of Confucian texts.) Like Eliot's, Pound's definition of culture is inclusive and anti-elitist: he explicitly distinguishes between book-learned 'knowledge' and 'culture' that is 'in people, "in the air"'. To specify this latter sense of culture Pound used the term '*paideuma*', coined by the German anthropologist Leo Frobenius (1873–1938), and defined by Pound as 'the tangle or complex of the inrooted ideas of any period' (1970b: 24–26).

FOUR QUARTETS

Eliot's *Four Quartets* begins, in 'Burnt Norton', with abstract speculations about time, returning to the Bergsonian concepts that had governed his early verse: 'Time present and time past / Are both perhaps present in time future / And time future contained in time past'. But the problem that this conception of time presents to Eliot in the 1930s and 40s is that it amounts to a rejection, or at least a devaluation, of history and culture, in favour of the subjective experience of the moment. The aim, then, is to relate the subjective moment to shared history, 'to apprehend / The point of intersection of the timeless', though the speaker admits that this is 'an occupation for the saint' and in practice 'For most of us, there is only the unattended / Moment, the moment in and out of time' (1969a: 171, 189–90). Nevertheless, taken together, these barely perceived moments in and out of time are what constitute our collective history:

history is a pattern
 Of timeless moments. So, while the light fails
 On a winter's afternoon, in a secluded chapel
 History is now and England.

(1969a: 197)

History is not only a time but a place, and the geographical particularity of *Four Quartets*, with each quartet named after a location, looks forward to Eliot's argument in *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* that 'a culture should be analysable, geographically, into local cultures'. Culture, according to Eliot, is best transmitted between generations by families living in the region of their ancestors, preserving local cultures that contribute to but are not identical with the national culture (1967: 15, 52, 58). In 'East Coker', named after the village in Somerset from which Eliot's ancestor Andrew Eliot emigrated to Massachusetts in the 1660s, Eliot presents a vision of the local culture passed down through his own family, quoting from a 1531 treatise written by another ancestor, Sir Thomas Elyot (c. 1490–1546). In an open field, we hear 'the music / Of the weak pipe and the little drum' and watch the sixteenth-century villagers 'dancing around the bonfire / The association of man and woman / In daunsinge, signifying matrimonie, a dignified and commodious sacrament'. The dancing, and Eliot's description of

it, repeats the orderly pattern of the seasons, ‘Keeping time, / Keeping the rhythm in their dancing / As in their living in the living seasons’ (1975: 177, 178), and repeats the pattern of history itself.

The governing motif of the *Quartets* is identical with that of *Notes towards the Definition of Culture*, and also looks back to Eliot’s doctoral research at Harvard: Eliot has consistently been concerned with the philosophical examination of the relationship of the part to the whole, the one to the many. On this issue, Eliot is a cultural relativist: in *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* he affirms ‘the vital importance for a society of friction between its parts’ in generating creativity and preventing totalitarianism (1967: 58–59). At the same time, his association of culture with religion, and English culture with the history of the Anglican Church, leads Eliot to aspire towards a society based on Christian principles. In 1939 Eliot published a volume that was a forerunner of *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture: The Idea of a Christian Society*. The book developed from conversations with a small group of Christian thinkers called the Moot, especially from discussion of proposals for a new Christian order put forward by the French Catholic philosopher (and former Action Française member) Jacques Maritain in his treatise *True Humanism* (1936) (Eliot 1982: 42, Kojecy 1971: 131). *The Idea of a Christian Society* was also a response to the threat of fascist and communist totalitarianism, as Europe moved toward a second world war. ‘Deeply shaken’ by Britain’s capitulation to Hitler in the Munich Agreement, Eliot wrote, ‘we could not match conviction with conviction, we had no ideas with which we could either meet or oppose the ideas opposed to us’ (1982: 82). To Eliot, the only ‘positive’ element in a culture he deemed ‘mainly negative’ was Christianity, and he therefore recommended that England be restructured and run according to Christian principles.

Munich Agreement. Agreement made on 29 September 1938 between the leaders of Britain, France, Germany and Italy that required Czechoslovakia to surrender the German-speaking Sudetenland adjacent to the German border to Germany. The agreement was made to avert war with Germany, but Hitler reneged on the agreement and marched into Prague the following March.

Four Quartets resolves its questions in ‘Little Gidding’, the title referring to a Cambridgeshire village whose history represented an ideal sympathy between Church and State for Eliot: it is the site of a seventeenth-century Anglican community that sheltered Charles I during the Civil War. Eliot describes the approach to the community, imagining Charles I’s arrival at night, a ‘broken king’, but emphasizing the continuity of the village’s culture:

If you came this way,
 Taking any route, starting from anywhere,
 At any time or at any season,
 It would always be the same: you would have to put off
 Sense and notion. You are not here to verify,
 Instruct yourself, or inform curiosity
 Or carry report. You are here to kneel
 Where prayer has been valid. And prayer is more
 Than an order of words, the conscious occupation
 Of the praying mind, or the sound of the voice praying.
 And what the dead had no speech for, when living,
 They can tell you, being dead: the communication
 Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living.
 Here, the intersection of the timeless moment
 Is England and nowhere. Never and always.

(1969a: 192)

The intersection of the timeless moment occurs not through individual thought ('sense and notion'), but behaviour that has been repeated by generations ('kneel / Where prayer has been valid'). This is why religion and culture are so closely connected: ‘behaviour is also belief’, Eliot wrote in *Notes towards the Definition of Culture*, and this ‘gives an importance to our most trivial pursuits’, not only praying, but dancing around the bonfire, or – to use his 1940s examples – watching a cup final and eating Wensleydale cheese (1967: 32). All contribute to the local and national culture.

MIDDLE AND LATE CANTOS

The Cantos’ discussion of culture also proceeds by comparison between present and past, but it does so in quite a different manner from *Four*

Quartets. In place of Eliot's intricate arguments, Pound presents 'whole slabs of the record', in the form of long passages copied out of history books and original historical documents, to bring to our attention high points of culture that mainstream histories have 'shelved, overclouded, and buried' (1970b: 30). This method is used most intensively in *Cantos LII–LXXI* (1940): the first half presents translated passages from a history of China from 3000 BC to the eighteenth century (*Histoire Générale de la Chine* (1777–85) by J.A.M. de Moyriac de Mailla) and the second half quotes at length from *The Works of John Adams* (1850–1856), which records the establishment of the American republic during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Pound suggests a continuity of civilization between Confucian China and the United States under Adams's guidance, before the cultural decline (in Pound's opinion) of the nineteenth century (1973: 147).

The China and Adams Cantos contain some of the densest material of the poem. Pound moves through his source material extremely swiftly, and the juxtaposition of names, abbreviated phrases, Chinese ideograms and foreign quotations is not easy to follow: even while we are invigorated by the welter of information, we are likely to become frustrated by the gaps in our understanding. But that is part of Pound's point: we *should* know these histories, and our difficulties make us aware of our ignorance of important elements of our past. For Pound, alerting readers to these little-known areas of history and highlighting their main lessons was more important than presenting a complete and accurate account, and this he achieved (1970b: 151, 231). The major points of these cantos are clear: the Chinese emperors he praises are those who improve their subjects' lives, both practically ('Chin Nong [...] made a plough that is used five thousand years' and 'held market at mid-day') and intellectually ('Ti Ko set his scholars to fitting words to their music') (1994: 262). The diaries and letters of John Adams reveal a personality with a similarly inclusive sense of cultural values, a leader in the struggle for American independence, who was also able to appreciate the importance of a 'fine bowling green and fine turtle, madeira', pleasures that make up a daily life worth living (1994: 364).

Pound had always intended *The Cantos* to mirror the design of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, depicting hell, purgatory and paradise, but it was only after a quarter of a century's work on the poem that he was ready to begin planning his *Paradiso*, his vision of an ideal world, his equivalent,

in some senses, of Eliot's *Four Quartets*. 'My economic work is done (in the main)', he remarked in 1939, 'I shall have to go on condensing and restating, but am now definitely onto questions of BELIEF' (1971: 328). But *Guide to Kulchur*'s chapter 'The Promised Land' records Pound's doubts about his ability to compose this final section: comparing his poem to Dante's, he writes that the *Paradiso* is 'undiscussable [...] any reach into it is almost a barrier to literary success'. While he asserts that a 'certain truth exists', he questions whether it can exist, or even be represented, outside the individual mind, and even then it is perhaps 'perceptible in our own minds only with proper "lighting", fitfully and by instants' (1970b: 292, 294–95).

Remarkably, it was the calamitous public and personal events of the Second World War that provided that ‘lighting’ needed to produce *The Pisan Cantos LXXIV–LXXXIV* (1948), *Section: Rock-Drill De Los Cantares LXXXV–XCV* (1955) and *Thrones de los Cantares XCVI–CIX* (1959), most of which Pound wrote during his incarceration, first at the Disciplinary Training Center of the US army in Pisa, and then in St Elizabeth’s. Under these conditions, Pound initially had to abandon the compositional method of the China and Adams Cantos: in the training centre the only books available to him were the volume of Confucius and the Chinese dictionary he was carrying when arrested, and a small anthology of poetry he found (Carpenter 1988: 658, 667). Thrown back on the resources of his own memory, *The Pisan Cantos* are a work of culture in the specific sense defined in *Guide to Kulchur*: ‘Knowledge is NOT culture. The domain of culture begins when one HAS “forgotten-what-book”’ (1970b: 134). The fragmented memories of former friends, splinters of quotation from favourite works (including his own), and contemplation of the concrete details of daily life are as close to Dante’s *Paradiso* as is possible for the modern mind:

Le Paradis n'est pas artificiel

but spezzato apparently
it exists only in fragments unexpected excellent sausage,
the smell of mint, for example,
Ladro the night cat.

While *The Pisan Cantos* contains some of Pound's most technically accomplished and highly praised poetry, its placing of the long-

anticipated paradise in the individual mind, rather than in the external world, draws attention to a major difficulty in the poem. The early cantos related history through a multitude of voices, deliberately resisting the use of a controlling authorial voice. But as Europe moved towards a second world war, and Pound became more convinced of his own solutions, his voice is heard in the poem increasingly insistently. By the time Pound published *The Pisan Cantos*, the authority of the poem, once dispersed across history, is firmly concentrated on the author, and the poem's successful conclusion now relies on the correctness of his solutions. The last books of the poem attempt to externalize the subjective paradise of *The Pisan Cantos*, 'to move out from egoism and to establish some definition of an order possible or at any rate conceivable on earth', as Pound told an interviewer (Hall 1962: 49). The task proved impossible, and some of the most famous lines from the end of the poem (*Drafts and Fragments of Cantos CX–CXVII* (1969)) attest to Pound's sense of failure, 'I cannot make it cohere', he writes in Canto CXVI, and in Notes for CXVII et seq, 'I have tried to write Paradise / [...] Let the Gods forgive what I / have made' (1994: 810, 816).

What is the relevance of a poet's social and political views to their poetry? This question was keenly debated in the press when *The Pisan Cantos* won the Bollingen Prize for the best volume of verse by an American poet published in 1948, while Pound was incarcerated in St Elizabeth's. The many opponents of the award argued that in honouring Pound the prize committee (which included Eliot) had effectively condoned fascism and anti-Semitism. For some commentators the award signified not only a crisis in poetry, but in literary critical values, too. They argued that it highlighted the fundamental irresponsibility of the 'Impersonal theory of poetry', first defined by Eliot and subsequently taken up by a group of university teachers known as the New Critics: *The Pisan Cantos* could be admired only by refusing to connect the political views of the poet to the poem, and by focussing on its formal qualities, rather than its anti-Semitic and fascist content. But in fact neither Eliot nor the New Critical members of the committee defended their decision in this way: though *The Pisan Cantos* expressed political views they condemned, it was nevertheless the book that had overwhelmingly won the committee's vote. To award the prize to a different, inferior, book, seemed to them dishonest. As one of the many letters from the public pointed out: it is not the case that 'good poetry can

only be written by a good democrat about democratically acclaimed ideals and emotions' (Leick 2002: 20, 21, 24, 29).

From the 1920s onwards, Eliot and Pound insistently connected poetry and politics: indeed, they believed that poets had a responsibility to speak out on political issues, and that their poetic training in the use of language was a relevant skill. Eliot begins *The Idea of a Christian Society* by remarking that 'while the practice of poetry need not in itself confer wisdom or accumulate knowledge, it ought at least to train the mind in one habit of universal value: that of analysing the meanings of words' (1982: 43). Pound comments in 'How to Read' that 'the individual cannot think or communicate his thought, the governor and legislator cannot act effectively or frame his laws, without words, and the solidity and validity of these words is in the care of the damned and despised *litterati*' (1960: 21). One might say that over the course of their careers Eliot's and Pound's attention shifts from poetry in particular to language in general, and this is borne out by the extension of their writing into new genres in their middle and later years. After publishing *Four Quartets*, Eliot wrote primarily for the theatre, believing that 'the ideal medium for poetry, to my mind, and the most direct means of social "usefulness" for poetry, is the theatre' (1964b: 153); alongside *The Cantos*, Pound published translations, anthologies, economic tracts and textbooks. These works were not only intended to reach a larger audience than the poetry, they were intended to reach a different kind of audience: not the private individual, poring over a volume of verse in isolation, but the public community, listening, reading and – Eliot and Pound hoped – acting together.

SUMMARY

This chapter has explored Eliot's and Pound's engagement with social and political questions, focussing in particular on how Eliot's conversion to Christianity and Pound's commitment to Social Credit economics shaped their poetry and their understanding of the poet's role in society. Both poets move away from the ideologically open texts of *The Waste Land* and the early *Cantos* to a more didactic form of poetry: rather than analysing the contemporary situation, this poetry aims to provide answers. Pound thought he had found these answers in the fascist Italy of Mussolini, Eliot in Anglo-Catholicism. Both poets wrote important prose works that integrate their literary and social views under the banner of 'culture', and their late poetry encapsulates their broad conception of this term, prescribing it as an antidote to the political turmoil of mid-twentieth-century Europe.

AFTER ELIOT, HULME AND POUND

The poetic and critical legacy of Eliot, Hulme and Pound shaped the literary landscape of the twentieth century, and in the twenty-first century they remain essential reference points. But this is not to say that responses to their work have been wholly positive. Their influence has been consistently challenged, and in this concluding chapter we will examine, first, the response to their work by subsequent poets, then changes to the field of modernism they helped to create, and, finally, their continuing influence in English Literature as a subject of study.

MODERNIST POETRY

Just as Eliot, Hulme and Pound shaped their poetry through complex interactions with their literary predecessors, so the poets who came after them defined themselves in various ways against the modernist tradition. During the 1920s Eliot and Pound were the vanguard of poetic revolution: *The Waste Land* and *The Cantos* dramatically expanded the possibilities of what one could do in poetry. Their sophisticated metrical experiments established free verse as a flexible yet demanding medium and provided a form that could express the variety of rhythms of conversation. They returned the venerable form of the long poem to use in modern poetry by replacing continuous narrative with juxtaposed images, vignettes, and quotations. In terms of content, the

city and modernity replaced nature and universal values. These writers also changed the very way the poet conceived of her or himself: they rejected the romantic conception of the poet as natural genius, in favour of the poet as a technically skilled professional.

Only a decade after the publication of *The Waste Land*, however, a new generation of poets was proclaiming a break with modernism. In 1932 Michael Roberts's anthology *New Signatures* appeared, grouping W.H. Auden, C. Day Lewis and Stephen Spender, who, with Louis MacNeice, would become the main representatives of the Thirties Poets. In his introduction, Roberts sharply contrasted these poets with their modernist predecessors who had, he wrote, shown contempt for society and 'become aloof from ordinary affairs', producing 'esoteric work which was frivolously decorative or elaborately erudite'. He characterized the Thirties Poets as engaged with their political and social context (they were strongly drawn to Communism), appealing to a wider, less highbrow audience, and returning rhyme and regular metre to modern poetry (1932: 10–11, 16). The Thirties Poets had been far more influenced by modernist poetry, especially Eliot's, than this description allows, and Auden especially would later be associated with Eliot by the neo-romantic poets of the 1940s, such as Dylan Thomas and W.S. Graham, who reacted against their intellectual, urban poetry. In fact, one can see the beginnings of the romantic revival that would be the key factor in the British turn against modernist poetry in the Thirties Poets' belief in the poet as a spokesperson, communicating in ordinary speech. The 'Movement' poets of the 1950s, including Donald Davie, Thom Gunn, Philip Larkin and Elizabeth Jennings, turned against both urban modernism and neo-romanticism, and instead traced their lineage back through an English literary history unbroken by the American interruption of Eliot and Pound. The early twentieth-century poetry they admired was the modest, keenly observed and less experimental verse of Thomas Hardy, A.E. Housman and the Georgian poets. By the middle of the twentieth century British poets seemed to have moved away from modernism: Eliot, seen as by far the most significant modernist, was rejected by most poets (despite the fact that, as poetry editor at Faber, he was responsible for publishing many of them), Hulme was known more as a philosopher and critic than a poet, and Pound, who had left Britain in 1920, seemed irrelevant.

Poets in the United States have proved more consistently receptive to modernism, and many of the twentieth century's most important

poets identified themselves with the tradition of Eliot or Pound, though rarely both. Eliot's influence was deeply felt in the 1920s and 1930s in, for example, the poems of Hart Crane, the early poetry of Robert Lowell and in the work of the Fugitives (later known as the Southern Agrarians), especially Allen Tate. As the century progressed, it was the Eliot of *Four Quartets*, the formally-controlled guardian of tradition, rather than the poet of *The Waste Land*, who was admired and imitated. In 1960, however, Donald Allen's *New American Poetry* anthology revealed a new generation of poets who had been working in a different direction. Allen's introduction explained that the new poets rejected 'all those qualities typical of academic verse', by which he meant the Eliot-influenced verse that predominated, and instead were following the example of Pound and Pound's college friend and former imagist, William Carlos Williams (1960: xi). Poets included in Allen's anthology included Charles Olson and the Black Mountain poets (named after the experimental college in North Carolina with which many of them were associated), the poets of the San Francisco renaissance, such as Robert Duncan and Gary Snyder, and the Beat poets, including Allen Ginsberg. These diverse poets extended Pound's and Williams's formal experiments in a variety of ways, but if one were to look for a shared approach, it would be in interpreting modernist achievement as an energetic opening out of the poetic text. It is worth noting that much of this experimentation went against the grain of Pound's intention in *The Cantos*, specifically in rejecting coherence as a major poetic value. In fact, as a number of critics have commented, it was precisely the 'failure' of *The Cantos*, its lack of coherence, which proved most enabling for these poets.

The emergence of a new generation of modernist poets in the 1960s brought to light other, older, poets who had been working in the Pound–Williams tradition in Britain and the United States, the most important of whom were Basil Bunting and the Objectivist poets Louis Zukofsky and George Oppen. It is these figures, along with other modernists such as H.D. and Gertrude Stein, more than the once-dominant Eliot, who stand behind the poets who today identify themselves closely with the modernist tradition. Though too numerous and various to describe here, some of the most important contemporary modernists include Roy Fisher, Christopher Middleton, J.H. Prynne and the Cambridge School, John Ashbery, and Language poets such as Susan Howe and Charles Bernstein. Despite Eliot's and Pound's shared

history, their poetic legacies have become almost opposed traditions, Eliot standing for the meditative lyricism and metrical order of *Four Quartets*, Pound for the perceptual precision of imagism and the open form of *The Cantos*.

MODERNISMS, ANTI-MODERNISMS AND NEW MODERNISMS

The reaction against Eliot by experimental poets, especially in Britain, was in part a response to his remarkably high reputation among the general public and the academic establishment. From the 1920s to the 1960s Eliot's poetry and criticism formed the basis not only for modern poetry courses, but for a whole approach to literary study. It was during these years that 'modernism' came to be defined as a period and a literary style, and it was defined largely in relation to Eliot's and Hulme's ideas.

Modernism is not a descriptive term like 'nineteenth-century literature', and if it has a meaning it is a historically specific one. It was invented as a literary category in the 1920s and first influentially used by Laura Riding and Robert Graves in *A Survey of Modernist Poetry* (1927), a guide that drew most of its examples from Eliot's poetry and that of e.e. cummings, an associate of Pound's. The term entered critical use at just the point the young discipline of English was being transformed into a serious university subject and, when universities began to consider offering courses in modern literature, the intellectual rigour Riding and Graves's *Survey* had shown was demanded by modernism recommended it as an appropriate subject of study. When students at Columbia asked for a course on modern literature, its difficulty contributed positively to the faculty's decision. One of its members recalled the faculty's attitude as 'We shall give the course, but we shall give it on the highest level, and if they think, as students do, that the modern will naturally meet them in a genial way, let them have their gay and easy time with Yeats and Eliot, with Joyce and Proust and Kafka, with Lawrence, Mann and Gide' (Trilling 1965: 8).

Not only was modernist literature appropriately difficult, it was also morally serious. For a new generation of academics and critics in both Britain and the United States, Eliot's poetry and criticism provided a means to analyse and criticize the direction of modern culture. In Britain, the Cambridge academic F.R. Leavis and the critics around his

journal *Scrutiny* set the study of literature against what they perceived as a national slide into mass or popular culture. In the United States, the New Critics (who incorporated the Southern Agrarian poets) posited literary criticism as a corrective to scientific and utilitarian approaches to knowledge. Eliot's key concepts of tradition, impersonality and the dissociation of sensibility defined the new literary values, and Eliot's poetry provided the paradigmatic examples of modernist literature. Hulme had a place in this new critical landscape, too: one of the most influential New Critical essays, Joseph Frank's 'Spatial Form in Modern Literature' (1945) elevated Hulme's account of Worringer's theory of abstraction to a defining principle of modernism. Frank argued that modernist literature's major innovation was in disrupting the way we read in time (one word after another), by using the cubist technique of juxtaposition. In poems such as *The Waste Land* and *The Cantos*, he argued, fragments are juxtaposed in space, requiring the reader to apprehend the fragments simultaneously, as a unity (1991: 5–66). The first substantial book-length studies of Eliot (F.O. Matthiessen's 1935 *The Achievement of T.S. Eliot*) and Pound (Hugh Kenner's 1951 *The Poetry of Ezra Pound*) appeared during this period and, like most studies of modernism until the late 1970s, they emphasized the formal and intellectual unity that Eliot's essays had trained them to recognize as the supreme literary value.

When the critical tide turned against Leavisite criticism and the New Criticism in the 1970s, it also turned against the perceived sources of its values: modernism and, especially, Eliot. The new critical approaches, loosely grouped under the label of 'postmodernism', defined themselves not only as after modernism, as the term suggests, but often against modernism, too. Though notoriously difficult to define, for our purposes postmodernism can best be understood as a critique of modernity and its major beliefs and values, such as progress, rationality, the unified self and 'grand narratives' (like religion, science or history). According to many critics of the 1970s and 1980s modernism was the artistic embodiment of these values.

In his *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1974, English translation 1984) the German critic Peter Bürger argued that modernism was not the break with the past it claimed to be, but rather the last gasp of romanticism. The real break with the past was made by what he called 'the historical avant-garde', the proto-postmodernist movements of Dada and surrealism, which became prominent in the 1920s. Previously, 'avant-

garde' had been a term synonymous with modernism, both taken to mean self-consciously experimental art, and indeed Dada and surrealism were usually described as modernist movements. Bürger, however, used 'avant-garde' in a very specific sense. He argued that the historical avant-garde did not simply create new styles of art, as the modernists did, and as the romantics had before them; they changed the nature of art itself. They did this by taking art out of its separate sphere and making it part of everyday life: they made collages and constructions of mass-produced objects and poems from newspaper cuttings, thereby negating the concept of the individual artist creating an 'original' work. They created for the crowd, rather than the individual (1984: 51–53). Bürger's argument was extended by another critic, Andreas Huyssen, who argued that modernism instituted a 'Great Divide' between high art and mass culture, and postmodernism, born from Bürger's historical avant-garde, rightly rejected that divide (1988: vii–viii).

Influential as these arguments have been, it has since been pointed out that the version of modernism presented here is somewhat of a straw man. If postmodernism is a critique of modernity, so is modernism: Eliot's and Hulme's cyclical view of history, all three poets' preference for intuition over reason and the questioning of grand narratives undertaken by Pound in *The Cantos* and Eliot in *The Waste Land* all suggest that modernism and postmodernism have significant shared interests. The modernism that postmodernism is post is not so much the early twentieth-century experimental art movement than it is the New Critical and Leavisite version of modernism, and in freeing modernism from these associations the postmodernist critique has rejuvenated modernist studies. In the 1980s critics such as Maud Ellmann, Marjorie Perloff and Jean-Michel Rabaté provided vibrant new readings of *The Waste Land* and *The Cantos* that highlighted their postmodernist potential. More recently, critics have begun to dismantle canonical modernism itself, and have started to explore previously obscured modernisms, the plural form influentially used as the title of Peter Nicholls's 1995 study. Bonnie Kime Scott's *The Gender of Modernism* (1990) and Suzanne Clark's *Sentimental Modernism* (1991) have returned female writers to the overwhelmingly male modernist canon; Michael North's *The Dialect of Modernism* (1998) highlighted the centrality of race; and Laura Doyle and Laura Winkel's collection of essays *Geomodernisms* (2005) reminds us that modernism was not only an Anglo-American movement. Eliot, Hulme and Pound are by no means excluded

from these new modernisms – indeed Hulme appears to be enjoying somewhat of a resurgence – but their dominance in literary history is rightly being questioned.

HOW TO READ

The subject of English Literature is no longer dominated by Eliot's, Hulme's and Pound's critical values. In place of a theory of impersonality, we have the rise of life writing; political engagement is valued over critical disinterestedness; originality is once again a term of praise. Their influence over the literary canon has lessened: Milton, Shelley and Swinburne can now be studied without shame. But in one area our study of literature is still directed by these poets: in the priority given to close reading.

By 'close reading', I mean the detailed analysis of a short work or extract from a work, where the focus is primarily on the interrelation of the text's linguistic elements, rather than its authorial or historical context. It is often an exercise set in examinations, and it is a fundamental building block of most other (more contextual) kinds of criticism taught in school and university English departments. It may seem so normal, so natural, a practice that it is hard to imagine how one would study literature without it. Yet, there was criticism before close reading. It usually took the form of 'gossipy, and often highly metaphorical, description and unspecific praise', as one early twentieth-century critic remembered (Tillyard 1958: 84). Close reading was effectively invented in the mid-1920s by a young Cambridge lecturer called I.A. Richards, who had been deeply impressed by Eliot's, Hulme's and Pound's work. Richards's *Practical Criticism* (1929) aimed to provide a new technique of poetic analysis: it isolated a series of 'reading malfunctions' Richards had observed in his students' analyses of poems when contextual material (such as author and date) was removed. Like Eliot's, Richards's educational background was in philosophy, and like Eliot's, his criticism drew on its analytical procedures. And although Eliot criticized aspects of Richards's approach, it was his criticism, especially in *The Sacred Wood* and *Homage to John Dryden*, which provided the basis of Practical Criticism, particularly its tools of 'comparison and analysis', as opposed to interpretation from context, and its aim of discerning (in poets) and developing (in readers) 'the unification of sensibility' (Eliot 1980: 33, 286; Richards 1929: 9–12, 304). More generally, Richards's method

also drew on Hulme's and Pound's criticism, in particular their aversion to rhetoric, their emphasis on visual imagery and precise statement, and, above all, their very close attention to language.

Practical Criticism institutionalized Eliot's, Hulme's and Pound's early theories of poetry and criticism and disseminated them to universities and schools across Britain and the United States. It is no longer the only way we approach literature, and we are now well schooled in the intellectual dangers of reading literature out of context. But, nevertheless, close reading is a modernist approach to criticism: Eliot, Hulme and Pound taught us to read, and they continue to do so.

FURTHER READING

PRIMARY WORKS

Works by T.S. Eliot

——— (2004) *The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S. Eliot*, London: Faber & Faber

This is the most comprehensive edition of Eliot's poetry and drama available.

——— (1971) *The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts Including the Annotations of Ezra Pound*, ed. Valerie Eliot, London: Faber & Faber

When this facsimile was published it transformed how people read *The Waste Land*. It reproduces Eliot's typescripts and manuscripts (including his, his wife's and Pound's annotations), with very useful notes by Eliot's second wife. The American critic Lawrence Rainey has recently published a new edition of *The Waste Land* with an introduction that provides a very detailed analysis of these drafts: *The Annotated Waste Land with Eliot's Contemporary Prose*, New Haven: Yale University Press.

——— (1999) *Selected Essays*, London: Faber & Faber

Although this is a relatively small selection of the many essays Eliot wrote, it contains most of the essays you will find critics citing, and

is certainly the place to start with Eliot's prose. A very good alternative selection, harder to obtain in the UK, is Frank Kermode's 1975 *Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot*, New York: Harvest.

——— (1996) *Inventions of the March Hare*, ed. Christopher Ricks, New York: Harcourt Brace & Company

This collection presents Eliot's early, pre-*Pru*frock poetry, most of it unpublished elsewhere, and is invaluable for showing the early development of his style. It has an excellent introduction and notes by a leading Eliot scholar.

——— (1988) *The Letters of T.S. Eliot, 1898–1922*, ed. Valerie Eliot, London: Faber & Faber

This is the first and, currently, only volume of Eliot's letters available. It provides a fascinating insight into his youth and college years, and documents the beginning of his career in London.

Works by T.E. Hulme

——— (1994) *The Collected Writings of T.E. Hulme*, ed. Karen Csengeri, Oxford: Clarendon Press

This is the most complete and accurate collection of Hulme's essays and poetry, with an authoritative introduction and notes. It corrects the mis-datings present in the two previously available collections of Hulme's essays, *Speculations*, ed. Herbert Read, London: Routledge and *Further Speculations*, ed. Sam Hynes, Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

——— (2003) *Selected Writings*, ed. Patrick McGuinness

This excellent selection contains more of Hulme's poetry, but fewer essays, in particular fewer of the essays on Bergson. Nevertheless, Hulme's most important work is here, the introduction is good and, unlike the edition above, it is easily available and affordable.

Works by Ezra Pound

——— (2001) *Personae: Collected Shorter Poems*, London: Faber & Faber

This has for years been the standard collection of Pound's non-*Cantos* poetry and contains most of his important work, but the

recently published Library of America edition (below) is much more comprehensive.

——— (2003) *Ezra Pound: Poems and Translations*, ed. Richard Sieburth, New York: Library of America

Excellent collection of Pound's non-*Cantos* poetry, chosen by one of the best Pound scholars. It combines previously separate volumes of early poetry, shorter poetry and translations. More difficult to obtain in the UK than in the US.

——— (1994) *The Cantos*, London: Faber & Faber

The Cantos was published in sections during Pound's lifetime, and this edition collects the separate books together. A *Selected Cantos* is published by New Directions.

——— (1976) *Collected Early Poems of Ezra Pound*, ed. Michael John King, New York: New Directions

This contains Pound's early poetry, both his first published volumes and also notebooks and poems unpublished elsewhere.

——— (1954) *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, ed. T.S. Eliot, London: Faber & Faber

The first collection of Pound's essays to be published, it appeared in 1954 while Pound was held in St Elizabeth's, and therefore excludes his more controversial writings. It is somewhat idiosyncratic in its choices, and should be supplemented by *Selected Prose*.

——— (1973) *Selected Prose*, ed. William Cookson, New York: New Directions

A more representative collection than *Literary Essays*, but both are needed because no essays are repeated across the volumes. Includes essays on economic and political topics as well as important literary essays.

——— (1971) *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907–1941*, ed. D.D. Paige, New York: New Directions

Many of Pound's most important statements about poetry were made in his letters. Like the *Literary Essays*, this collection was first published when Pound was in St Elizabeth's and emphasizes his literary work rather than his political and economic interests. There are many further editions of Pound's letters available, organized by correspondent.

SECONDARY WORKS

Works on T.S. Eliot

Asher, Kenneth (1995) *T.S. Eliot and Ideology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

This book provides the most detailed analysis of Eliot's interaction with Charles Maurras and the Action Française.

Bush, Ronald (1984) *T.S. Eliot: A Study in Character and Style*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Probably the best general account of Eliot's work in the last 25 years. This is an even-handed, extremely perceptive account of Eliot's poetry and thought and it also provides discussion of the various critical debates Eliot's work has inspired.

Chinitz, David E. (2003) *T.S. Eliot and the Cultural Divide*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press

Influential recent work that argues against the standard view of Eliot as a highbrow, by reading his poetry through his popular culture interests, such as detective fiction, music hall and jazz.

Crawford, Robert (1990) *The Savage and the City in the Work of T.S. Eliot*, Oxford: Clarendon Press

Wide-ranging discussion on Eliot's poetry and prose, which is particularly strong on Eliot's interest in anthropology and myth.

Gordon, Lyndall (2000) *T.S. Eliot: An Imperfect Life*, New York: Norton

This biography, a synthesis of Gordon's two previous biographies on Eliot, *Eliot's Early Years* (1977) and *Eliot's New Life* (1988), is the most detailed and literary critical of the extant biographies. Peter Ackroyd's 1993 *T.S. Eliot*, London: Penguin is also good.

Jain, Manju (1992) *T.S. Eliot and American Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Of the several excellent books on Eliot's philosophical studies, this is the best to begin with. It provides a clear, detailed account of Eliot's education in philosophy at Harvard, including his Bergsonian year in Paris, and gives a good sense of the state of American philosophy during the early twentieth century. It also has a useful appendix of the courses Eliot took at Harvard. Rafey Habib's study, *The Early T.S. Eliot and Western Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, is also very good, especially on Eliot and Bergson.

——— (2002) *A Critical Reading of the Selected Poems of T.S. Eliot*, Delhi: Oxford University Press

This is the best line-by-line guide to Eliot's poetry, although B.C. Southam's more easily available *A Student's Guide to the Selected Poems of T.S. Eliot* will also explain most local difficulties. Neither includes *Four Quartets*, which is covered by Harry Blamires's *Word Unheard: A Guide Through Eliot's Four Quartets*, London: Methuen.

Julius, Anthony (1995) *T.S. Eliot, Anti-Semitism, and Literary Form*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Julius is unequivocal in his argument that Eliot's anti-Semitism is an integral part of his poetic and prose projects. Although this is the most famous and most thorough discussion of the topic, Christopher Ricks's 1988 study, *T.S. Eliot and Prejudice*, London: Faber, contains an important chapter on anti-Semitism, and current opinion is summed up in the roundtable 'Eliot and Anti-Semitism: The Ongoing Debate' in *Modernism/Modernity*, 10 (2003), 1–70

Kojecký, Roger (1971) *T.S. Eliot's Social Criticism*, London: Faber & Faber

Still the only book to provide a sustained account of Eliot's writings on society and culture.

Menand, Louis (1987), *Discovering Modernism: T.S. Eliot and His Context*, New York: Oxford University Press

Readable, insightful account of Eliot's role in the creation of modernism, with an emphasis on the way Eliot's strategic packaging and marketing of his critical ideas created an audience for his and his colleagues' poetry.

Works on T.E. Hulme

Comentale, Edward P. (2004) *Modernism, Cultural Production, and the British Avant-garde*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

This has a chapter on Hulme that argues for his centrality to modernism, and is particularly insightful on the context of the romanticism/classicism opposition.

——— and Gasiorek, Andrzej (eds) (2006), *T.E. Hulme and the Question of Modernism*, Aldershot: Ashgate

This collection of essays on all aspects of Hulme's writing (poetry, philosophy, art criticism, politics) gives an excellent sense of the current state of Hulme studies.

Ferguson, Robert (2002) *The Short Sharp Life of T.E. Hulme*, London: Penguin

The most recent of the Hulme biographies, and therefore able to draw on the most collective wisdom. This is the place to start, but the two previous biographies, Michael Roberts's 1938 *T.E. Hulme*, London: Faber & Faber, and Alun Jones's 1960 *The Life and Opinions of T.E. Hulme*, London: Gollancz, remain important, even though they are hampered by the mis-dating of Hulme's essays which obscures the trajectory of Hulme's thought.

Rae, Patricia (1997) *The Practical Muse: Pragmatist Poetics in Hulme, Pound, and Stevens*, Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press

This is a well-regarded scholarly work that places Hulme's and Pound's theories of poetry in the American philosophical tradition of pragmatism. It is not an easy read, but its description of an American, rather than French, philosophical background for modernism is important.

Works on Ezra Pound

Bell, Ian F.A. (1981) *Critic as Scientist: The Modernist Poetics of Ezra Pound*, London: Methuen

Excellent account of Pound's criticism and poetry, focussing on the influence of new scientific writing on Pound's thought. Very helpful in analysing some of the most distinctive aspects of modernism, such as its concern with precision, energy and pattern.

Bernstein, Michael André (1980) *The Tale of the Tribe: Ezra Pound and the Modern Verse Epic*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press

One of the most important general accounts of *The Cantos*. This book interprets the poem in the context of the epic tradition, and also looks at the legacy of the poem in the work of William Carlos Williams and Charles Olson.

Brooker, Peter, *A Student's Guide to the Selected Poems of Ezra Pound*, London: Faber & Faber

There are several good line-by-line guides to Pound's *Selected Poems*, but this guide, and Christine Froula's 1983 *A Guide to Ezra Pound's Selected Poems*, New York: New Directions, are particularly helpful. They gloss most difficulties in the shorter poetry and selections of *The Cantos*.

Bush, Ronald (1976) *The Genesis of Ezra Pound's Cantos*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press

Engaging and thorough account of the early stages of *The Cantos*, which provides the best introduction to the major aims and themes of the poem. It also reproduces Pound's 'Three Cantos' (1917), important but discarded early cantos.

Carpenter, Humphrey (1988) *A Serious Character: The Life of Ezra Pound*, London: Faber & Faber

This enormous biography is exhaustive in its detail: a fascinating read, but also an invaluable resource (its index is excellent). The other biography that is also worth consulting is Noel Stock's 1970 *The Life of Ezra Pound*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, written by a poet and critic who knew Pound and was able to consult him while writing the biography.

Kenner, Hugh (1973) *The Pound Era*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press

This is the best-known book on Pound and, indeed, one of the most influential works of criticism in modernist studies. It is impressionistic and partisan, but brilliant and wide-ranging. Essential reading.

Nicholls, Peter (1984) *Politics, Economics and Writing: A Study of Ezra Pound's Cantos*

Excellent analysis of the impact of Pound's economic theories on his poetry. Even for readers uninterested in the economic angle, this is one of the most important books on *The Cantos*.

Redman, Tim (1991) *Ezra Pound and Italian Fascism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

The best book on Pound's politics, combining detailed biography with perceptive literary criticism. It also contains the clearest summary of Pound's economic theories.

Terrell, Carroll F. (1993) *A Companion to The Cantos of Ezra Pound*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press

Essential guide to serious study of *The Cantos*, which explains every reference in the poem, apart from those that continue to elude scholars. It does not, however, provide overview critical interpretations (as Brooker and Froula do, above). A much less comprehensive guide, but one that may be more useful for initial encounters with *The Cantos* is William Cookson's *A Guide to the Cantos of Ezra Pound*, London: Anvil Press.

Witemeyer, Hugh (1969) *The Poetry of Ezra Pound: Forms and Renewal, 1908–1920*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press

Though a number of studies have been written about Pound's early poetry since this book appeared, this is still the most accessible and astute introduction to the pre-*Cantos* verse.

WORKS ON MODERNISM

Armstrong, Tim (2005), *Modernism: A Cultural History*, Cambridge: Polity

The best of the many recent introductions to modernism. Remarkably wide-ranging account of modernism that represents the concerns of modernist studies in the 2000s as Nicholls's volume did in the 1990s.

Bürger, Peter (1984) *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press

Key work in modernist studies, which distinguishes between modernism and 'the historical avant-garde', to the detriment of modernism. It is written in dense, philosophical prose, but provides a penetrating analysis of modernism, the avant-garde and, indeed, the role of art more generally.

Jones, Peter (ed.) (2001) *Imagist Poetry*, London: Penguin

This is an anthology of imagist poetry, invaluable in itself, but listed here because its introduction provides one of the clearest short accounts of the imagist movement.

Kermode, Frank (2001) *Romantic Image*, London: Routledge

First published in 1957, it was this ground-breaking work that established the romantic and aestheticist heritage of modernism.

Longenbach, James (1987) *Modernist Poetics of History: Pound, Eliot, and the Sense of the Past*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press

This is a scholarly work that works through some difficult material: it is the best of the surprisingly small number of critical works that deal with modernism's theories of history.

Levenson, Michael H. (1984) *A Genealogy of Modernism: A Study in English Literary Doctrine, 1908–1922*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Much admired analysis of the critical connections that produced modernism. This book is more literary critical, less philosophical, than Schwartz's (below), and is renowned particularly for its re-dating of Hulme's essays, which transformed our understanding of his career. The best single introduction to the Eliot–Hulme–Pound strand of modernism.

Nicholls, Peter (1995) *Modernisms*, Basingstoke: Macmillan

This book is representative of the shift away from the New Critical version of modernism in the 1990s, expanding the modernist canon and showing the relevance of theoretical questions raised by studies of postmodernism.

Rainey, Lawrence (1999) *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press

Highly detailed and compelling account of modernism's dissemination through its 'institutions': its publishing houses, journals, patronage system and drawing rooms. One of its two chapters on Pound concerns Pound's marketing of imagism, the other discusses the Malatesta Cantos in relation to fascism; the chapter on Eliot analyses the publication of *The Waste Land*.

Schwartz, Sanford (1985) *The Matrix of Modernism: Pound, Eliot, and Early Twentieth Century Thought*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press

A pioneering account of the philosophical and critical ideas that underpin modernism, written in very clear and accessible prose.

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